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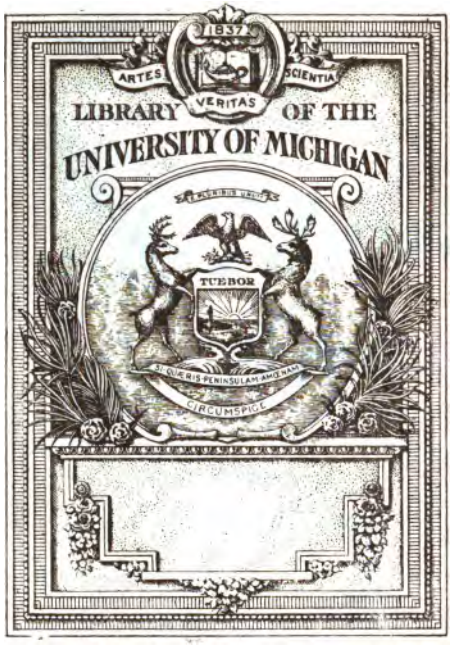

THE GIFT OF
J. Herbert Russell

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NAN DARRELL;

OR,

THE GIPSY MOTHER.

Ellen Pickering,
d. 1843

BY THE AUTHOR OF

"THE HEIRESS," "THE MERCHANT'S DAUGHTER," "THE SQUIRE," "THE PRINCE AND THE PEDLAR," ETC.

IN TWO VOLUMES.

VOL. II.

PHILADELPHIA:
CAREY AND HART.
1839.

Printed by
Haswell, Barrington, and Haswell.

NAN DARRELL;

OR,

THE GIPSY MOTHER.

CHAPTER I.

It is a hard matter for friends to meet; but mountains may be removed with earthquakes, and so encounter.

As you Like It.

Poor lady, she were better love a dream.

Twelfth Night.

Mrs. Dixon had a strange idea that to see sights was a proof of fashion, so after having quarrelled with the waiter, and the charges at one hotel, and removed to another, she set off with Kate to see the copper works on the other side of the water, openly expressing her disgust at being obliged to consort, for the brief two minute's row in the ferry boat, with market men and market women—a Welsh farmer, and a Welsh pony; two riotous dogs; and three more riotous, dirty boys.

Katharine with difficulty checked a smile at her declamation against the vulgarity of her fellow passengers, thinking how often the angry declaimer was herself sub-

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ject to the same censure; and the smile could no longer be repressed when Mrs. Dixon, rather than accept the proffered aid of a somewhat dirty hand to assist her over the wet, slippery plank, and the as wet slippery shingles, for the tide was low, missed her footing, and came down on one knee, thereby, to her great discomfiture, soiling a favourite silk dress, and subjecting herself to the laugh of those whom she had so openly abused. The same rough, dirty hand was extended to Katharine with a sly smile at Mrs. Dixon, and a friendly admonition to take it. Kate accepted it, as frankly as it was offered, and was safely handed to the top of the slippery, shingle bank by the gallant Welshman, proud of being allowed the honour, and absolutely grateful for her gentle thanks.

"Well, she is a sweet creature, surely! but she ain't long for this world," was the honest Welshman's thought.

To save the expense of a fly, Mrs. Dixon had chosen the nearest copper works wherewith to satisfy her curiosity, and prove her fashion; and the agent, who happened to be on the spot, came forward politely on learning her wishes, to do the honours of the copper lions, pointing out every thing worthy of notice as they passed along.

The copper ore had been looked at as it came out of the vessel—the door of one of the enormous ovens in which it is cleansed from arsenic and other particles had been opened, Katharine thinking, as she looked in and saw the flame curling round the vaulted roof, of the oven of the nursery tale into which the giant is thrust by the captive sisters; and the whole party were standing in the great smelting division with its numerous coppers full of boiling metal. It was a large, square space, with a raftered roof partly resting on rough wooden pillars. The various implements employed were scattered round in picturesque disorder; and, being near the time of the midday meal, the men were dispersed into groups, some conversing, some receiving their dinner from the hands of wives or children clad in the primitive Welsh dress,

the striped jacket and petticoat, with the black beaver hat over the broad frilled cap; and some were already seated at their humble repast at the further end of the building, or in one adjoining seen through an opening. That building would have been dark but for the fiery glow, and rich, red light shed around by the furnace fires and the melted ore.

Disliking the heat, which was intense, Mrs. Dixon drew back, but Katharine still stood before an immense copper in which boiled and bubbled the smelting metal, gazing admiringly on the mass of liquid fire, the colour of vivid flame; save where dulled or darkened by the scum, or catching tints of blue, or green, or purple, from accidental causes. One of the men advanced, and Katharine watched him, as he stood before her reeking with the heat, clear off the scum of varied colouring with a long handled iron scraper; and then open a passage from the boiler. Out poured the boiling ore, rich, glowing like a stream of lava, dimpling, bubbling, as it passed along, a gush of liquid fire, mimicing the dimpling and the bubbling of some summer rivulet.

"How beautiful!" exclaimed the delighted Katharine, raising her hands with something of the child-like rapture of her happier days, to the great amusement of the agent, to whom such admiration was a novelty.

For some moments longer she continued to gaze admiringly on the stream of fire, still flowing on into a large reservoir, gradually deepening in colour, and becoming less liquid as more cool, and then she turned to look on the effects of the vivid light on the objects round, throwing out some in glowing relief, casting others from intervening projections into deep shadow. Struck like the agent, by her delighted admiration, some of the workmen had drawn towards her, conversing in the Welsh language, and as she gazed on the nearest group, with the red light glaring full on their faces, she started, and turned pale, for there stood her father—her dreaded father, with his keen eye fixed upon her. For an instant she turned away—when she looked again that dreaded face was no longer there; but a man she fancied,

in obedience to some order of the agent given in Welsh, was leaving the building through an opposite doorway.

"Who is that?" she questioned quickly, with some faint hope that she might have been mistaken.

"David ap Reece: one of our best workmen, who has been with us these ten years," replied the agent, not without surprise at her abrupt question.

Then she had been mistaken. And yet that eye!—it had a power over her which no other eye possessed. She wished to believe that she had been deceived—that her alarm was vain; and to a certain extent she succeeded in persuading herself of what she desired; yet she did not breathe freely, (strange if she had in the atmosphere of a smelting house,) till she found herself winding round the foot of Kilvey Hill on her homeward way. The later lions of the copper works had been scarcely noticed—her thoughts had been on other things; and she had gazed anxiously on each fresh group—round each fresh building, fearing to meet again that startling look.

Mrs. Dixon felt too little interest in her health or feelings to remark the increased paleness of her cheek; or if she observed at all attributed it to the heat and suffocating atmosphere. No wonder that the grass and flowers droop and die beneath that blighting, smothering vapour; and yet the people near live to a good old age.

The day passed without a fresh fright, and Katharine decided that she must have been deceived. The agent had been right;—it was the unfeared David ap Reece, not the dreaded James Darrell. Thinking only of one person herself, she never considered the vagueness of her question—"who is that?" when there were many present.

Mrs. Dixon found a letter at Swansea which decided her on proceeding by the steamer on the following Monday to Stapleton, a village in the neighbourhood of Bristol, where a friend had taken her lodgings, and Katharine, though resolved to believe that she had been mistaken, was not sorry for their speedy departure.

The next day, after showing her smart bonnet and

pelisse, both more gay than elegant, at St. Mary's Church, Mrs. Dixon called on Katharine to accompany her in a walk, determined that all the inhabitants of the town should have an opportunity of admiring the said bonnet and pelisse. After pacing up and down the boroughs and the pier, (the sands from a high tide being unpaceable,) Mrs. Dixon turned up Wind Street with the laudable intention of equally enlightening the other end of the town as to the fashions.

"I wonder what all that uproar at the back of this street is about! I should like to know," remarked Mrs. Dixon, whose curiosity equalled her vanity, stopping to listen to a confused murmur of many voices.

"Only some of the common people quarrelling, I dare say," answered Katharine, having a horror of a crowd, particularly with only Mrs. Dixon for a chaperon, and aware from experience what reply was most likely to check her curiosity.

"I should not wonder; really the rabble should be kept in order; they are come to such a pass that elegant people cannot walk in peace for them—they have no respect at all for their betters," and on went Mrs. Dixon leeturing on the insolence of the rabble, all the way up broad Wind Street, and half way along narrow Castle Street, uninterrupted by Katharine, who rarely spoke but when compelled.

Here the oration was brought to an abrupt conclusion.

"Bless me! there is a large drop of rain; and there is another—I declare it is raining fast. Where is the umbrella, Miss Darrell?"

"You said it would not rain, ma'am, and therefore I did not bring it."

"That is always the way with you—you never do nothing right. Once for all I tell you never to go out without an umbrella; my bonnet and pelisse will be quite *spilte;* and all through you," cried Mrs. Dixon, looking out for a place of shelter as she spoke.

Being Sunday, of course every shop was closed, but a few paces forward was a low, arched way to the right,

and up this dashed Mrs. Dixon, followed by her companion, who thought, between sighing and smiling, how true it was that she never did nothing right.

"I wonder where this passage leads to," said Mrs. Dixon, after having carefully wiped off the drops of rain from her pet pelisse. "Do go and see, Miss Darrell ; and make yourself useful for once ; it cannot hurt your dress."

A few steps showed the obedient Katharine the outlet to the passage. It opened into a small, square court, shut in by buildings, with a flight of stone steps leading up to a poorish looking house on one side, and a closed door on each of the other three. One of these she could see through the chinks in the boards led into a garden, the other two apparently into some strong building not in the best repair ; and looking up she saw that the arched way under which they had sheltered was one of the entrances to the old castle, whose remains, with its long line of cloisters, she had so much admired from the other side of the water, as giving a character to the otherwise commonplace town.

"It must be a strange place ! I'll just take a peep, as it does not rain now," observed the curious Mrs. Dixon, on hearing her report, walking up the passage and into the court as she spoke. "I wonder whose garden this is,—can't you ask some one, Miss Darrell ? you never learn anything."

"There is no one here to ask, ma'am."

"No one here, indeed ! Look at those children ! You will say anything rather than give yourself trouble."

Katharine coloured slightly at the rebuke, which was perfectly undeserved, for there had been no one in sight till that very instant, when some boys and girls came running into the court, some rushing up the steps to the door of the house, at which those from within now appeared ; some standing to stare at Mrs. Dixon and her companion, others chasing to and fro between them and the passage as if in momentary expectation of a strange arrival.

"Whose garden is this?" asked Katharine of one of the little starers.

The child only stared the more, and then turned to the passage, up which came several women and one or two men, all looking back with the same appearance of expectation, yet all finding opportunity to stare at the ladies, who were evidently objects of surprise and curiosity, whether in themselves or from their situation, Katharine could not decide; whilst Mrs. Dixon attributed all the staring to admiration of her dress.

"What is the matter?" asked Katharine of one of the women.

A shake of the head, with a hurried "Dim Sassenach," was the only reply.

A treading of many feet, and a confused mingling of voices, some loud in wrath, which had been gradually nearing, now appeared to stop at the entrance of the arched way towards which all eyes were directed. Thither also looked Katharine, and, to her horror and dismay, saw a great crowd assembled, some already streaming up the narrow passage into the small court, capable of containing very few; and others behind struggling for admission by force of tongue and arm.

"Lock the door!" cried one of the foremost.

The door was locked with difficulty on those without; and then the narrow passage poured into the court its medley crowd; some actors in the tumult, some but spectators.

"What is the matter?" asked Katharine again of a decent looking woman beside her.

"Oh, ma'am, a wicked wretch! Killed a poor girl down by the wharf there—knocked her down with a rolling-pin. Well, surely, how he swears! and how he be a struggling!"

Katharine could not see his struggles on account of the crowd before her; but she could plainly distinguish language most unfit for female ear, or Christian tongue.

"What are they doing here?" she asked again.

"Why, don't you know? this is the lock-up house,

where they be a going to put him in," answered the woman in evident surprise.

"Good heavens! What shall we do?" exclaimed poor Kate: shocked and alarmed at the intelligence, and gazing with shame and terror on the crowd, who divided their attention between the struggling prisoner and the strange ladies.

"Why, did not you know it, then, and come on purpose to see un put in?" asked the woman, supposing all moved by the same tastes as herself.

"Not for the world! We are strangers, and only sheltered from the rain. Can we not get out?" asked Katharine, looking as if ready to dash through the crowd in her terror at the coarse language of the prisoner, and the staring of the wondering spectators.

"No; you can't get out, for the door is locked. But don't ye be frightened—they won't do no harm to you; and I'll take care of ye," replied the woman, placing her hand kindly on her arm.

"What is the matter?" asked Mrs. Dixon impatiently, forcing her way up to Katharine who was a little in advance.

The pale and trembling girl explained as briefly as she could.

"This is just like you, Miss Darrell. Getting me in here by talking of the strange things to be seen. A pretty place for me to be in among such a rabble," clutching away her dress from the pawing of a curious child. "What does the man struggle for when he can't get away, foolish fellow? What sort of a man is it?" she continued, trying to push through the crowd for a nearer view, being too short otherwise to catch a glimpse of the prisoner.

"Oh! do let us get back out of the crowd into this corner!" pleaded Katharine, sensitively alive to the awkwardness of her situation, holding her arm to stay her advance.

"Nonsense! if you will get me into a crowd you must take the consequences. I don't see why I should skulk into a corner as if I was ashamed," replied Mrs.

Dixon, pushing on as she spoke, her curiosity overcoming her dread of contact with the vulgar.

"Poor thing! I'll take care of ye, and put ye in a safe place," said the woman, who had begged Katharine not to be frightened, half carrying, half dragging her as she spoke up three steps, under the archway of a door, and out of the pressure of the crowd, above whom she was by this means slightly elevated.

"There, now, you be quite safe, and can see all, so you need not shiver and look so white. See! See!" pointing to the prisoner. "How he do strive—a wicked wretch! he must be in liquor surely; and how he be abusing them gentlemen that helped take un! They will never get him in at the door. Look! Look! how he swings his arm all round, right on the constable."

However horrible the sight that is acting before you, it is scarcely possible to hear one eager with the excitement of the scene urging you to gaze and not involuntarily comply. At that eager bidding Katharine turned towards the prisoner; by some chance their eyes met—it was her father!

His struggles ceased—his oaths were hushed;—his course was resolved on in an instant.

Only let me speak to my daughter, and I will submit at once," he said, addressing the constables, who were forcing him into the blind house.

"Where is your daughter?"

"There!" pointing to the pallid, trembling Katharine. "Come closer, Kate, and speak to me."

Kate did not—could not stir. To know herself the child of such a wretch!—to be thus claimed by him at such a moment, and in such a crowd!—to feel that every eye was fixed upon her in scorn, in pity, or in wonder, deprived her of the power of speech or motion. All she did was to continue gazing at her father, as if constrained by the compelling of some magic power.

"It is a lie."

"It is only to gain time."

"That pretty, delicate creature cannot be his child," said several.

"It is no lie—that is Kate Darrell, my daughter—let her deny it if she can;—those gentlemen will tell you that I speak the truth. Lord Ermiston knows her well; she was to have been his wife.

Ermiston! Katharine started at his name, involuntarily looking where the prisoner looked; and there a few paces off stood the Earl himself, flushed and angry at the appeal which had turned the eyes of the curious upon him, connecting him in the minds of the crowd, as he thought, with a feeling little short of horror, with the low, wicked wretch before him. Was he to be pointed out as that felon's intended son-in-law? Instead of answering the man's assertion boldly and frankly—instead of pitying and protecting Katharine, whose distress he saw in a hurried glance, and whose situation must be a thousand times more painful than his own, he turned haughtily away, declaring that he had never seen the man before, and knew nothing of him.

"But you shall see me again, and know more of me: ay, and repent of this, and wish that you had married her—but it shall be too late!" replied the prisoner fiercely.

Katharine met Lord Ermiston's hurried glance;—she saw him turn away in horror and disgust, without one pitying thought for her; and his name, which had involuntarily risen to her lips, forgetting at the moment all but her former trust in his affection, died away in a wordless murmur, as she covered her face with her hands to hide her shame. She was aware that another gentleman, and not a stranger, was standing by his side, but she had not marked his look of compassion—she had not counted on his protection — she had thought of Ermiston, and Ermiston alone.

"Kate, own that I am your father," exclaimed the prisoner authoritatively.

"Do not be alarmed!—I will protect you, let what will happen," said a voice close beside her; a voice which, save on one occasion, had never addressed her but in kindness—it was the voice of Herbert Eustace.

Kind as was the tone, she feared to withdraw her

hands, and gaze upon the speaker, lest his looks should belie his words—lest disgust and annoyance should be traced on his features, as they had been on Lord Ermiston's.

"Speak, Kate; I command you!" repeated her father.

"Is this true? Has he a right to command? If not, defy him. I understand all you must feel, and will protect you," said Herbert Eustace in a low, kind voice.

"Alas, it is too true!" replied poor Kate, in a tone scarcely louder than a whisper; so sad, so desponding, that the coldest must have pitied her.

"Do you wish to speak to your father?" he asked, hesitating slightly before he pronounced the word.

He marked her shudder before he heard her faint and hasty—"No!"

"Then I had better take you away—this is no fitting place for you."

"Will you take me away?—take me from him?" she demanded, clasping her hands in passionate pleading, and venturing for the first time to look up into his face.

"I will protect you with my life. Rely on me," was his prompt reply to that wild and touching entreaty.

And she did rely on him without a doubt—without a question as to what course he would pursue, clinging to his arm as he supported her through the crowd, who, touched with pity for the half fainting girl, made way to let her pass.

"Is that low wretch really your father?" asked Mrs. Dixon with the utmost contempt, as Herbert and his charge approached her in their passage out.

"This is no time to distress Miss Darrell by questions," replied her supporter sternly, feeling the shudder of the gentle creature clinging to him.

"Stop, Kate Darrell! I am not going to be left in the lurch here, while you play fine lady."

"Tell him I will give him money—all I have. Oh!

God forgive me that I cannot love him," exclaimed poor Kate, trembling in every limb.

"Miss Darrell is too ill and too much frightened by your violence to speak with you now ; and the course you are pursuing can only prove injurious to yourself. Submit for the present ;—I am not inclined to be harsh ; and when I have placed this lady in safety, will return and do what I can for you, in justice, for her sake."

The man looked doubtful for an instant, and said, "Do you promise, on your honour, Mr. Eustace, to return immediately, and not deal harshly by me—but treat me as her father ?"

"I do."

"Then I am satisfied. You are a man to be relied on—not a coward, afraid of being laughed at," he added, glancing with contempt at Ermiston, who, though standing apart, was still within hearing.

"Will you unlock the door, and let this lady out ? she is fainting," said Herbert to one of the constables.

"Yes, yes : I'll let her out, poor thing," replied the pitying officer, her *cavalier servente* of the ferry boat the day before, but so smartened in appearance that she might well be excused for not recognising him.

"You had better follow close behind us," said Herbert to Mrs. Dixon.

It was impossible to reach the street without approaching Lord Ermiston. Ill as she was—only half conscious of what was passing round her—Katharine knew this—felt this. The head was bowed still lower as she passed before him ; and the sigh that she could not suppress as he allowed her to proceed without one soothing word, only stepping back as she came near ; and her increasing faintness told her supporter that she still loved, and had still hoped, not perhaps for a return of affection, but for some show of pity.

Poor Katharine's trials were not over. The crowd which had pressed so eagerly forward to gain admission into the court still lingered round the door which barred their entrance ; and when Herbert and his fainting

charge appeared, followed by Mrs. Dixon, they had to endure the staring, the wonderment, and the remarks of those assembled.

"Cant't you stand back and be quiet? Did you never see a lady fainting before?" cried the constable authoritatively.

"Had I not better procure a fly for Miss Darrell?" asked Herbert of Mrs. Dixon.

"Just as you and Miss Darrell please. If she chooses to get into such scrapes she must get out of them as she can;—she should not expect me to pay for a fly."

"You shall not be asked to do so," he replied with a look which caused the lady to walk away, leaving her now-reviving companion to his protection. The friendly constable stopped a passing fly, and Herbert handed in his charge with a kind brother's care.

"Are you well enough to go home alone?"

"Yes, thank you, I am much better now.—Did you say you would return to him? Will you, indeed, show me more kindness?"

"Any, every kindness, for her sake who is no more; and for your own. What would you have done?"

"I know not!" she replied, clasping her hands. "They say he has killed some one—yet he is my father still. Oh, that I had died with her! I can do good to none;—all is shame and sorrow;—there is no peace for me but in the grave."

"Hush! Hush, my dear Miss Darrell! you must not talk thus. There are, I trust, long years of peace before you yet; you can do good to many by the patient bearing of your trials; and will yet be regarded and respected as you deserve. Your fears outrun the danger. The man only struck a girl, and then me for interfering. Of course, I shall not appear against him; and I have no doubt I can so arrange with the poor girl as to stay further proceedings."

"And will you do this? Will you save him—save me from public shame—the public gaze?"

"I will—only be calm," he said, for her wild manner shocked him.

"Do this, and I will be calm—quite calm. Take my purse—tell him I will send him more. He is my father, though I cannot love him. But I need not see him?—surely I need not see him?"

"Certainly not: I will make it a condition," he replied, observing how much she feared him. "Leave all to me—I will act in all things as you would wish."

Then telling her that she should thank him another time, he gave the requisite orders to the driver and returned to the prisoner.

"What does all this mean, Miss Darrell?" demanded Mrs. Dixon, flouncing into her room. "Who was the gentleman who handed you into the fly?"

"Mr. Herbert Eustace—nephew to Sir John Eustace," Katharine added, willing to propitiate Mrs. Dixon in his favour, lest she should throw some obstacle in the way of their meeting, should he come, as he had promised, to report the success of his endeavours.

"Indeed! And that other gentleman?"

"Lord Ermiston."

"And were you really ever going to be married to him?"

"Yes," faltered Katharine.

"La! how strange! Do tell me all about it," drawing close to her companion, forgetting her anger in her curiosity.

Her prying questions were a fresh trial, but Katharine so answered them, that Mrs. Dixon was tolerably satisfied with the explanation, though it revealed little more than she already knew; and the weeping girl had the pleasure of finding that, instead of throwing any obstacle in the way of a meeting with Mr. Eustace, she highly approved of his coming, on hearing that he was the nephew of a baronet, the cousin of an earl: nay, she even had the delicacy not to enter the room till some time after his arrival, and then made a sort of apology for her former conduct, asking him to tea as an *amende*, an invitation which, to Katharine's delight, he politely declined.

The report he brought was all she could desire—more than she had dared to hope.

By dint of talking to all the parties concerned, giving money to the injured girl, and dropping all complaint on the part of himself and Lord Ermiston, he had, with the assistance of an influential person, procured the release of the culprit, on condition of his leaving the neighbourhood immediately; a condition, on the fulfilment of which Herbert insisted for the sake of Katharine, and to which Darrell himself made no objection, the same reason which had induced him to avoid his daughter at the copper works, controlling him now that the necessity for claiming her assistance no longer existed. He had even the grace to send her his thanks; adding, that he had no wish to harm or terrify her, as he might one day show.

"I can pay you the gold by which you have quieted my fears," said Katharine, placing the sum in his hand, (an advance from Mrs. Dixon, and which he took with hesitation,) "but how shall I ever repay your kindness?"

"By claiming my services at any time when they may be required—by looking on me as an elder brother, the character assigned to me in other days, you know," he added kindly, but with no embarrassment to show that he had once played the lover.

Katharine sighed as she thought of former times; but before she could reply, Mrs. Dixon entered the apartment, and Herbert soon after took his leave, with a polite hope that they would have a pleasant voyage on the morrow; and some kind words to Katharine, but without the slightest reference to any future meeting.

Were his offers of service but empty words, then? or did he only mean that she might call upon him if they chanced to meet? He had asked nothing of her future plans—whence she had come—whither she was going. He had expressed no surprise, no sorrow, at finding her in her present situation. Was this indifference or delicacy? He had but once alluded to the past, and then she thought unwillingly, perhaps under the

idea that such allusions would be painful—or perhaps he would have entered on her situation and her plans, had not Mrs. Dixon entered when she had—and yet she scarcely thought so. Then, when relating what he had done to procure Darrell's release, of which she had insisted on hearing the details, he had named Lord Ermiston but once, and that incidentally, as not pressing the charge against her father, (for he, too, had been struck,) yet he must have known, that is, she thought he might have guessed how she pined to hear that the Earl had joined in serving her.

Was this silence, too, from delicacy? Did he mark how she trembled, only at the name, and did he despise her for this weakness? Or was he unwilling from his former enmity to his cousin to speak in his praise? Or had Lord Ermiston really taken no part in his kind endeavours—pitying her when absent as little as when present? And what should it matter to her what he had done—or what he had not done?

He had renounced the love for which he had so humbly sued ;—he had himself pronounced the words that parted them :—twice had he turned from her in disgust,—once, when claimed by her mother—now, when claimed by her father :—twice had he left her unprotected, not heeding her distress, to save himself from ridicule. And could she love him still? Shame on her woman's heart! She hid her face, for she felt the blood rush up into her pale cheeks, as she asked herself the question. It was the first time she had met Lord Ermiston and Mr. Eustace since the breaking off her engagement with the former—since the death of Mrs. Arnold—and under what circumstances had they met?

Then she was surrounded with every delicacy wealth could bring—guarded by every care love could imagine; —flattered—courted—the reputed heiress of thousands. Now she was a poor dependant—slaving for a bare subsistence—scoffed at and despised ;—courted—flattered —loved by none ;—a beggar—not an heiress! And how had she been met by the friends of former days? The accepted lover had turned from her in disgust ;—

the rejected lover had acted in all kindness; but yet even they had not met as in former days. The warmth, the frankness, the gaiety of their early acquaintance was no more. He was attentive, very attentive, almost formally so; but there was restraint instead of frankness; he had shown no pleasure at their meeting—expressed no wish that they should ever meet again. Was this manner to show her that, though willing to serve, he had ceased to love her, and had long since abandoned the desire to call her his? Was this manner to bid her mark the difference of her present station in society—to check her presumption? And could he really think that she required this checking and this warning? Was her humiliation never to be complete?—her trials never to be ended?

She ought to be very grateful to Mr. Eustace—she was very grateful;—but she could not quite conceal from herself that she was not as grateful as she ought to be;—that whilst she judged kindly of one cousin, she judged critically of the other; half inclined to quarrel with that ready kindness, which made the weakness and selfishness of Ermiston the more apparent from the contrast.

Poor Katharine was but a woman!

CHAPTER II.

I trace upon her altered brow
The ashes of a thousand dreams.
N. P. WILLIS.

"Two shillings, indeed! for bringing three small trunks just a few steps from the hotel. It is a downright cheat—I shall give no such thing. Here is a shilling for you, that is quite enough," exclaimed Mrs. Dixon, one foot upon the steamer and one upon the quay, haggling with a common man whom she had picked up, as she termed it, thinking that he would take her boxes cheaper than the regular porter of the hotel.

"Three small trunks! Well, surely if they be small, I knows nothing. And all the way from the Cambry, too. 'Tain't a hap'orth too much."

"It is a downright extortion, and I won't submit to it," rejoined Mrs. Dixon.

"You are perfectly right not to think of it, ma'am: I wish all were as public spirited," said a young man, in whose eyes revelled the love of mischief, crossing from the opposite side of the steamer.

Kate looked up at the voice: and then to that part from whence he had come. The voice was the voice of Mr. Ward—the party whose side he had deserted consisted of two stylish-looking females, a more than middle-aged gentleman, and Lord Ermiston. His lordship's head was at that moment turned away;—she did not look again.

"If you intend going in the packet, ma'am, I must beg you will come on board directly; I have already waited to the last minute, and am afraid we shall ground as it is," said the captain bluntly.

"But I can't come without my trunks, and I won't be cheated," replied Mrs. Dixon sharply.

"Capital! you are quite right, ma'am," cried the mischief-loving Ward.

"Cheated! I am no more a cheat nor yourself—nor so much, wanting to rob a poor feller of his bread; two shillings ain't too much."

"I say it is too much. I'll only give eighteen-pence; and that is sixpence more than you ought to have," replied Mrs. Dixon with increasing warmth.

"Then you shan't have the trunks, I'll keep 'em till you pays."

"Then I'll prosecute you for a thief, as you are," cried Mrs. Dixon.

"That is right," exclaimed Mr. Ward.

"Mean—stingy,—it is a great shame!" cried several voices from the crowd, who had been attracted by the altercation, and to whom the man was relating the whole transaction with violent gestures and a mixture of Welsh and English, utterly incomprehensible to those not accustomed to the mingling.

"I can't wait another minute," exclaimed the captain, handing in Katharine, who, ashamed and alarmed at the dispute, and overcome with the thought of spending a whole day in the same vessel with Lord Ermiston, submitted to his guidance, quite unconscious of what she was doing. "Come, ma'am! We can't wait any longer; you must come at once," offering to assist Mrs. Dixon into the packet.

"But I can't go without my trunks. Tell the man to put them on board."

"Come, my man! Don't keep the packet waiting—put the lady's trunks on board."

Lady, indeed! call her lady!" vociferated many in contempt.

"Pay, and I'll leave the trunks—if not, I'll take 'em back."

"Make him leave them!" almost shouted Mrs. Dixon, flushed with rage, appealing to Mr. Ward and the captain. The first only mischievously encouraged her to be firm, applauding her spirit, whilst the last muttered—"I have nothing to do with this. Throw off there! and put on the steam."

"For heaven sake, pay him! every one is looking at us," pleaded poor Katharine, ready to sink with shame and vexation.

"I shan't, indeed, replied Mrs. Dixon, flinging off the hand she had placed on her arm with rudeness; "you may have more money than you know what to do with out of what I pay you, but I am not so rich."

"Captain, put me on shore again," she said, having been obliged to enter the packet to avoid falling into the water, as it parted from the quay. "Put me on shore, I'll prosecute that man if it costs me a thousand pounds. Here is the money," throwing him eighteen-pence; "and now if he keeps the trunks I'll trounce him."

"I'll give you two of the trunks, missis, and keep the other till you pays all," exclaimed the man, amid the laughter and cheers of his companions, swinging two of the trunks on board as he spoke, but retaining one, and unluckily poor Kate's.

"That is Miss Darrell's concern, not mine;" remarked Mrs. Dixon triumphantly. "You may manage that as you please; but you deserve to lose it, you will have such a heavy trunk. You had better try what bargain you can make, he may ask less from you," she added, turning away to a seat.

"What does he ask? Give him anything!" said Katharine, roused to action by the fear of losing her trunk, and holding out her purse to the captain.

"Holla to him, and say you will pay a little extra; and I dare say he will bring it off in a boat," answered the Captain quickly, confounding the trembling girl with Mrs. Dixon, whose meanness had disgusted him.

Holla ! poor Katharine holla, when the vessel had floated into the middle of the stream, and the crowd were laughing at her vexation, and cheering the man who, shouldering her trunk, was preparing to depart! And all this to have occurred in Lord Ermiston's presence ! They seemed ever doomed to meet under circumstance of shame to her.

" Permit me to assist the fairest of the fair," said Mr. Ward, advancing with an impertinent manner to where she still stood, at the side of the packet, watching the receding trunk.

" I will settle it for you," said the kindly voice of Herbert Eustace, who, having been arranging some luggage till within the last few moments, had only just learnt the cause of contention.

A few words to the captain, to whom he was known, and all was settled. A boat took in the trunk at the end of the pier, Kate, of course, readily paying the demand through Mr. Eustace, whilst the captain made a blunt apology for not having sooner proposed this plan, pleading in excuse for not waiting, that the tide was running fast out of the harbour. The tide was running fast and the vessel grated on the shingles as she passed out— five minutes more and she could not have sailed for the next twelve hours.

" I am so much obliged to you," said Katharine, as Herbert returned to her side, gladly turning away from Mr. Ward, whose flatteries were displeasing.

" I am sorry my ignorance of your distress precluded my interfering sooner ; but it was a sudden fancy our crossing to-day, and I was busy seeing to the safe packing of the carriage. You have been alarmed, and tremble still ; let me recommend an hour's rest in the cabin," he said, drawing her arm kindly within his as he spoke, for he saw that she needed support ; and perhaps, he thought, might not be sorry to be farther removed from Lord Ermiston, who had looked steadily at Kilvey Hill during the whole of their contention, not once offering to assist her.

Never was advice more acceptable; but Mrs. Dixon's

voice recalled the recollection that she was no longer her own mistress;—she was hired to be useful and amusing. Herbert guessed the cause of her sudden hesitation.

"I will amuse Mrs. Dixon, and you cannot be rude enough to doubt my powers of entertaining, though in losing my title I am aware I lost half my perfections. Good morning, Mrs. Dixon: I want you to second me in persuading Miss Darrell to lie down a little; she has a twelve hour's voyage before her, and does not look very strong; but she seems disinclined to leave you, though I have promised to do my best to be entertaining; and I really can be very agreeable when I try."

"No one can doubt that," said the lady graciously. "You had better go down, Miss Darrell; and I hope when you come on deck again you will look less like a ghost."

Katharine did not come on deck again for some hours; not, indeed, till Mrs. Dixon herself went to call her, telling her at the same time though, that she had not missed her in the least, Mr. Eustace had made himself so pleasant, lending her a book when obliged to join his party; whilst the other young man said she was perfectly right about the trunk. The people he was with seemed very grand and proud ; and would not speak to any of the passengers.

"I thought Lord Ermiston might have asked after you, Miss Darrell, considering that you had once been going to be married, but he would not say a word, though I went and stood by him; said you were poorly; and asked when we should land at Bristol. He drew back as if I had been a blackamoor, quite unlike his cousin, Mr. Eustace, who is a real gentleman, and that other young man, Ward, I think they call him, who seems very sensible and pleasant. Well, much good may it do people to be so proud."

"Here comes the companion on deck again! then I shall go and have some fun," said Mr. Ward, who was sitting by Lady Richmond. "That is, if you do not forbid the flirtation, Ermiston, for I understand she is

the very identical Katharine Darrell to whom you enacted the lover at Sallowfield, and I hear there was a capital scene at the old castle yesterday. Only fancy, Lady Richmond, Eustace, and Ermiston, playing the Quixotes, and helping to put a man in the blind house for knocking down a poor girl, who called him a thief, or some such thing, escorted all the time by 'a splendid rabble rout.' Then fancy that fragile, delicate creature going to the sight (that is the greatest marvel to my mind) and the prisoner claiming her as his daughter before the constables, and all calling on Ermiston to confirm his statement from his former engagement, and consequent knowledge of her connections. It must have been capital fun! I would have given a thousand pounds to have been there. Ermiston's horror, absolute horror at the appeal; and being held up to the vulgar rabble as the son-in-law of such a wretch must have been superb. I wonder he survived the shock; and am no longer surprised at his having been so dull and stupid last night. But really Ermiston you should go and say a civil thing to the young lady; you know she could not help having such a papa. Come with me now," passing his arm within his, in full enjoyment of his vexation.

"Cease this folly!" cried his lordship, snatching away his arm with a look and tone that for a moment checked his tormentor—but only for a moment.

"You will not? Well, then, I must go and say pretty things for you—that is, if you will give me leave, and promise not to be jealous."

"You are at liberty to act as you please for yourself, Mr. Ward; but I insist upon it that you do not render my name ridiculous through your nonsense."

"Your most obedient, humble servant," replied Mr. Ward, taking off his hat, and bowing to the ground. "Then you give up the lady, or the lady has given up you; and you graciously grant me permission to play the pretty to her."

"Miss Darrell is—can be nothing to me," observed his lordship proudly.

"She shall be something to me, then. Such a flirtation ! you shall be jealous despite your pride."

"What does Ward mean ?" asked Herbert Eustace, hearing only his last remark.

"To have some fun, as he calls it, with that vulgar woman's companion," replied Lady Richmond.

"And you could permit this, Ermiston? Has not the poor girl trials enough, but you must join with her hard fate against her ?"

"I have no right to interfere," remarked his lordship haughtily, colouring at the rebuke.

"You never could have loved her," said Herbert Eustace contemptuously, as he passed him to follow Ward, who was already annoying Katharine by his impertinent flatteries, whilst Mrs. Dixon was conversing with a fellow passenger.

After inquiring with marked respect if the rest he had recommended had recruited her, he freed her from her disagreeable companion by saying that he wished to consult him about the carriage ; but, dusk as it was, for night was coming on, Katharine could see from their manner that the subject they were discussing was one of no common interest ; and on which there was apparently a difference of opinion.

"It is getting cold. Do bring me that cloak lying by the chimney," said Mrs. Dixon.

Katharine obeyed, and as she approached the speakers unperceived, from the darkness, she heard Ward say, "If you will admit, that you mean her to be Mrs. Eustace, of course I have done ; if not, a companion is always fair game ; I only want a little fun, and Ermiston did not object."

"For shame, Ward ! her very dependance should be her protection from annoyance to a man of feeling and honour."

"Is she to be Mrs. Eustace ?"

"Never ! but I will guard her from impertinence."

Katharine heard no more :—having found the cloak she returned to Mrs. Dixon:—she had heard enough!—

What a prospect for her future life ? She could not

always have Herbert Eustace to protect her. She had given him trouble enough already. She reproached herself for not being sufficiently grateful, and then, doubtless as a means whereby to increase her gratitude, she thought of his abrupt and decided—nay, she fancied contemptuous—"never!" when asked if she were to be Mrs. Eustace:—a never, the tone of which, said still more plainly than the word, that such an idea was not —never could be in his mind.

And Katharine was hurt, piqued at this;—not that she had the slightest desire to be Mrs. Eustace—not that she wished him to desire it, for never was being further removed from a coquette; but then his never need not have been quite so decided and contemptuous. He had thought of her once—yes once—but now!—now! yet his contempt, his abrupt denial, knowing as he knew her father, was more than justified. He was not to be blamed, she said to herself, and yet in her heart she did blame him severely, whilst glossing over, or striving to forget the selfish fastidiousness of Lord Ermiston; and this secret censure caused a restraint in her manner, when he joined her soon after, having, as it appeared, induced Mr. Ward to abandon his ungenerous scheme of having fun with the companion.

She fancied amid all his attention to her wants and wishes, the same something that she had fancied before —something different to what his manner had been to her in former days—to what it now was to others:—a something meant to say, "I will be your friend, but you must be made to feel that I can never again be your lover." She had no right to blame him if such was his intention, as their encounter in the Castle Court had been their first meeting since the breaking off of her engagement with his cousin; but, as we have said, she did blame him in her heart, shocked that he should think such a guarded manner requisite; and so languid were her endeavours to keep up the conversation, that, remarking he feared she was suffering from fatigue, to which she assented, adding that she had a headache, he ceased to talk, and soon after quitted her side.

Poor Katharine had little heart that day for the beauties of nature, so it mattered not that it was dark when she passed up the Avon. Had it been broad daylight, Cook's Folly, with its touching and mysterious legend—Nightingale Valley, with its spell-like, dreamy beauty, would have been unadmired:—her thoughts were busy with the world within—what to her was the world without? St. Vincent's rocks stood out a dark and giant mass beneath a pale new moon, their very outline shrouded in obscurity; lights gleamed and glanced above, below, from the houses scattered amid the trees. The windows of the Paragon showed like a crescent of glow-worms, now seen, now lost; yet Katharine saw none of this—knew not that her voyage was nearly completed, till the speaking trumpet of the captain on the paddle-box, and the cries of "Let go her anchor!" "Wear her round!" "Port a-helm!" and other unintelligible terms, uttered in no gentle whisper, disturbed her reverie, deep as it had been; and the grating of the vessel against the side of the basin some short time after, would have told her they had arrived at their destined port, had not the mutual congratulations of some of the passengers, the noise and confused mingling of many voices, and the rush on deck of porters and hotel puffers, assured her of the fact.

What a Babel of sounds! What a labyrinth of confusion!

"Where are my trunks?"—"that is mine if you please, sir, there is my name on the top." "I'll thank you, ma'am, to let that carpet-bag alone, it belongs to me." "Keep this, Mary, whilst I look for your box." "Please to want a porter, I'll take your trunks for you anywhere, sir." "Vant beds, ma'am?" "Here's the Gloucester close by, excellent beds." "Vant lodging for the night, sir? Here's the Albion—just three steps off—capital accommodation—can't be better." "Stop, stop, sir! that is my umbrella you are carrying off." "Bring the light this way, steward; I can't find my portmanteau anywhere," cried a hoarse voice. "Stop a minute, till I have just found my daughter's basket," re-

plied a squeaking one. "Tom, Tom, that man has run off with the dried salmon." "Please to want a porter, sir?" "Van't a porter, ma'am? I'm the boy to suit ye." "Would not you like a fly, ma'am? here is No. 36, capital horse and fly!" "Here is No. 29, sir, can't be a better fly no-where!" "Boy, boy, lower the light, or I shall be in the bason: I'm half in now." "Please, ma'am, not to push so, I can't get up the steps any faster, there is a fat gentleman before can't pass the boy with the lantern." "Can't you stand the other side, my boy." "Noa, Noa, I knows better nor that, I should be shoved into the water."

Such were some of the cries which came in strange confusion to the ears of the bewildered Katharine, who had never before been on board a steamer, or landed at Bristol about twelve o'clock at night. All seemed crowding, talking, scuffling, shouting, scolding. How was this disorder ever to be reduced to order?

How was she ever to land in safety? She looked round, but the night was too dark for her to see more than some dusky buildings, and the gleaming lights on the other side of the water: and nearer, bridges and the masts and chimneys of steamers, which looked unnatural objects in the gloom.

"Why don't you look after your trunk? Some one will take it if you don't have a care: I have found mine," said Mrs. Dixon, addressing Katharine sharply.

The loss of her trunk would certainly be no inconsiderable loss, but how was she to press through the crowd at that part of the vessel where the luggage was stowed to look for it?

"Can I be of any service to you, Miss Darrell?" asked Herbert Eustace, as if divining her difficulty.

"Thank you; will you be kind enough to find the trunk which you rescued for me once before to-day?"

Her heart reproached her for her want of gratitude as he went on the instant to fulfil her wishes, returning in a few moments with one of the sailors carrying the trunk.

"Come along, Eustace ; we are going, and cannot wait for you any longer," said Mr. Ward, passing at the moment with Lady Richmond leaning on his arm, Miss Clarendon following with Lord Ermiston.

A movement among the crowd pressed the latter so near to Katharine that his clothes brushed her's.

"I beg your pardon," he said with cold politeness.

Katharine merely bowed ; and he passed on.

This was the only notice he had taken of her—the only words he had spoken to her throughout the day.

"Do not wait for me, I will join you at the Gloucester," replied Herbert, turning again to Mrs. Dixon and her companion, "can I be of any service in procuring you a porter, or a fly, or in seeing you safe on shore ?"

Katharine would have most thankfully accepted the offer ; but Mrs. Dixon declined it, saying that she had already made every arrangement, and begging that she might not detain him.

It was so evidently her desire to get rid of him, that he could not but depart.

"Good night, and good bye, Miss Darrell ; and I hope our next meeting will be under brighter skies," glancing up at the dark vault above them, and leaving her to interpret his meaning as she pleased, literally, or metaphorically.

"I ought to thank you, Mr. Eustace," began Katharine.

"No, you ought not :—gratitude is a pleasure to be felt, not a duty to be enforced ; I should thank you for allowing me to serve you. Once more, good bye !"

Before she could reply he was gone, and the wearying, worrying, vexations of this wearying, worrying, work-a-day world, prevented her mind from dwelling on the suspicion that he had read her thoughts, and knew her gratitude was not likely to be carried to excess.

"Mr. Eustace is a very pleasant and polite young man ; but he does not care how he throws away money.

I was not going to let him get me a porter, or a fly, and pay just what was asked."

"Have you neither fly nor porter, then?" exclaimed poor Katharine.

"Not yet. I shall make a better bargain by waiting."

"I do not wish to hurry you, ma'am," said the captain, with just the manner calculated to do what he did not intend; "but the steamer is just going through the lock into the other basin, and there may be some difficulty in landing; nearly every one else is gone. Here is a porter who will take your things to the Gloucester."

"I am not going to the Gloucester; I am going to Stapleton."

"You had better stop at the Gloucester to-night; we are the last packet, and you will scarcely get a fly," he remarked, more in pity to Katharine than from any favor to Mrs. Dixon.

"I am not such a simpleton as to pay a long bill at the Gloucester, when I have a home ready for me at Stapleton."

"Just as you please, ma'am, only you must either go on shore directly, or wait till the steamer gets into the basin, which may not be this half hour, and then you will find no fly."

So said the steward, and the stewardess, not out of good will, for her largeness had been too small to acquire that, but for the purpose of getting rid of her.

Thus pressed, she had no other alternative but to close with the offer of the only porter left, making a worse bargain than she would have done had she departed sooner. Mrs. Dixon was left to make her way alone out of the vessel, and up the narrow stair leading from the water, without a protecting rail, and scantily lit; but the captain himself assisted Katharine, and thankful was she for his assistance. Even familiar places seem strange by night, and strange places stranger still; and when she had climbed the narrow stair in safety, and looked around, there seemed to her inexperienced

eye nothing but strips of water with high-walled barriers, and innumerable bridges must be crossed, dark as was the night, for they had landed on the Bedminster side where no flies were to be had, and they must pass the docks, or the locks, or whatever they were to be called, before they could procure a conveyance.

"Follow me, ma'am," cried the porter, "I'll show you the way."

Mrs. Dixon and Katharine tried to follow him, but were soon left behind, bewildered by the darkness, which made them cautious to advance.

The first bridge was passed in safety, but what was then to be done?

They were on a long, narrow strip of land between two streams of water, and no apparent means of crossing the one before them, indeed but for a brief glimmer of light, Mrs. Dixon, who was in advance, would have fallen into the lock.

"We are wrong—we must go back."

They went back to the bridge over which they had just passed, but it swung from them on the instant to admit the passage of a steamer coming up with its hoarse, rumbling noise.

Mrs. Dixon and Katharine stood aghast—the porter was out of sight and hearing too, it seemed, for he did not answer to the former's call, and they could see no one near them. What was to be done?

"There must be a bridge to the other side, I think I can discover one," said Katharine, peering through the gloom. "Yes, here it is!" she exclaimed, delighted at the discovery, and only waiting for Mrs. Dixon to join her. Her foot was on the bridge, when she was pulled back with some violence, and the exclamation—"Is the woman mad? Do you want to be drowned?"

"Certainly not," replied Katharine, half smiling at the question; "but we want to go to Dorry, or Dowry Square, or some such place, where there are flies."

"Flies, this time of night!" cried the man who had pulled her back. "Dowry Square, and so you meant to get over like a rat, swimming and climbing."

"No, indeed, I meant to go over the bridge," she replied, half provoked and half amused.

"Go over the bridge! Why don't ye see it's swinging round now? ye'd have been in the water in the twinkling of an eye if I had not caught ye. But there's just time; t'other bridge ain't opened yet. Come along! quick," and, seizing a hand of both, he dragged them full speed down one little slope, up another, and then one by one across a narrow bridge of planks with no defence, but a light rail on the upper side, the light from his lantern gleaming down far below on the dark, still water of the lock. "There now, you be safe t'other side; and I hopes you'll give me some'at to drink your health."

"Thank you, my good man," said Mrs. Dixon, walking on with the porter, who being honest, instead of running off with the trunks, had returned to look after their owners.

"Thank ye, miss; I wishes ye health and wealth;—the old un's stingy," said their singular guide, with a familiar nod to Katharine, pocketing the money she had given.

Dowry Square was reached in safety, but there was no fly on the stand; and the porter refused to wait, or endeavour to procure one without further pay.

"He had fulfilled his engagement, she should fulfil her's. For the matter of a fly, he did not think she could get one, 'twas so late they was all put up; she had better go to the Gloucester, or some where else."

Mrs. Dixon would not go to the Gloucester, or any where else. She argued, scolded, threatened—the man did the like;—the watch came to know what was the matter—some late idlers collected round, laughing and making comments any thing but flattering, till poor Katharine, finding her endeavours to quiet Mrs. Dixon only increased her wrath, and overcome by the trials of the day, sat down on one of the trunks, giving way to the tears which she had no longer the power to control.

"Poor thing! I am sorry for her," said some of the bystanders.

"Yes, she's a different body."

"What can I do for ye?" asked their former guide, joining the crowd.

"Only get us a fly," replied Katharine, delighted at his presence, hoping that he would again stand her friend.

"Flies! Bless your pretty face, they be all gone to bed."

"Has there been any accident?" asked a gentleman, passing with his servant, before the laugh caused by this reply and its singular manner of utterance had subsided.

"Oh, Mr. Eustace! can you?—will you?—you offered"—exclaimed the almost despairing Katharine in broken words.

"I will do any thing to serve Miss Darrell," replied that gentleman, springing to her side, and drawing her arm within his, for she had risen as he spoke. "What has happened? What can I do for you?"

A few moments explained her wishes—a few more accomplished them. The porter was paid and dismissed—the crowd dispersed—the watch were satisfied that their duty required no committal—and the servant, Lord Ermiston's, though Herbert did not say so, sent to procure a fly; whilst Mr. Eustace himself remained to protect the ladies, Mrs. Dixon refusing to go to the Gloucester, lest she should have to pay for the shelter.

"Please to tell your servant, sir, that I won't pay ten shillings for a fly to Stapleton, because it is late, as that man declared I must," said Mrs. Dixon to her protector, still in a rage, though obliged for his interference.

"I will take care of that," said Herbert, giving the servant orders in a low voice.

It was long before the fly arrived, and there sat the three on the trunks in Dowry Square, Mrs. Dixon detailing her grievances, perfectly unconscious of the little heed paid to her lamentations by her companions; whilst Katharine, pale and trembling, checking her weeping as she best could, tried occasionally to thank Mr. Eustace, who was doing his utmost to soothe her,

speaking too low to disturb Mrs. Dixon, wrapping her cloak more closely round her to shield her from the night air, asserting his pleasure in serving her; and now and then chiming in with the elder lady with marvellous propriety, considering that he did not hear above one word in ten of her angry discourse.

"Here comes the fly," exclaimed Mrs. Dixon joyfully.

"You had better let the servant see you safe home, and he will take care that the flyman makes no attempt to impose upon you," observed Mr. Eustace.

"I am sure I am much obliged to you; and shall be happy to see you over at Stapleton to lunch."

"Thank you; but I go to town early to-morrow; we poor barristers cannot do our own pleasure. I am truly glad that the servant's negligence, by obliging me to return to the packet, enabled me to assist you. Will you direct the flyman where to put the luggage."

The next moment he was standing a little apart with Katharine, holding her hand in his whilst speaking to her with a warm friend's earnestness. "Do not think me impertinent in asking if your stay with this sordid woman is from necessity or choice."

"Necessity."

"Is she a relative?"

"Oh, no! but I am without friends, and can procure no other situation. As long as I have health to bear, I must:—and then go to the parish, I suppose."

"Good heavens! I am shocked—deeply shocked—" he exclaimed, his unsteady voice proving the truth of his assertion. "Surely you have some friends."

"None! None, but two faithful servants, and I cannot, will not live upon their savings."

"Come, Miss Darrell; don't stand talking there," cried Mrs. Dixon from the fly.

"I would thank you for your kindness, Mr. Eustace —but I cannot. Do not think I have not felt it?".

He started at her words from his momentary abstraction.

"You have one friend, Miss Darrell, though he may

not be a very efficient one. A poor barrister is a different person from a rich baronet; but if Herbert Eustace can aid you, do not deprive him of the pleasure by any timid scruples. Ever count upon him as a friend. Heaven bless you! Keep up your spirits!—we may meet again ere long."

Katharine could not speak; but she returned the kindly pressure of his hand; he bowed to both the ladies, and the fly drove off.

The following day revealed the cause of Mrs. Dixon's abode at Stapleton. Seeing little chance of contracting a marriage with one of much more elevated rank than her own, she had settled there for a time, under the pretence of business, for the purpose of meeting a lover of her younger days (the captain of a vessel in the West India trade) who had amassed a tolerable fortune by his industry and integrity.

A few hours explained to Katharine the wishes of Mrs. Dixon: but a few days unfortunately revealed to her that the wishes of Captain Blacklock were no longer exactly similar. The blunt captain fell in love with the delicate companion, instead of the vulgar mistress; and, in spite of Katharine's coldness and the dictates of prudence, made an offer of his hand and heart to the poor young spinster, instead of the rich elderly widow.

"I am not young, and I am not a fine gentleman; but I am an honest spoken, English sailor; and if you will have me, I will try and make you happy," was the blunt address of the plain, kind-hearted captain, on accidentally finding Katharine alone in one of his daily visits to the widow.

"Well, if you won't have me, I can't help it, so it is of no use to say more about it. I wish you happy, any how; and a more comfortable home," was his blunt reply on his proposal being declined, leaving the house without seeing Mrs. Dixon.

Before many hours Katharine with her bundle, as Mrs. Dixon chose to designate the very trunk against whose size and weight she had declaimed at Swansea, was in a fly, on her way to Bristol, after enduring the

rage of that gentle lady who had learnt (how, she did not explain) that her companion had superseded her in the good graces of her former lover, making herself agreeable to her visitors, when she was only hired to make herself useful to her. Of course this could not have been accomplished by fair means; no one could have preferred the companion to her, but through manœuvring or coquetry, so she was fully justified in turning her out of the house on the instant, and refusing to pay the arrears of salary, declaring that she would publish her character to the world.

To appeal from this decision would have been useless; and so great was her fury that Katharine might well be thankful that words were not succeeded by blows.

Had she possessed but the faintest prospect of any other situation, her sudden dismissal would have been considered as a blessing, rather than a misfortune, for she was ill able to endure the constant vexations of such a companionship—but she had no hope of procuring employment, and no home to go to but the Carter's; whilst her small means, diminished by the sum paid to her father, and her yearly expenses (for Mrs. Dixon had expected from her far more than her scanty salary could furnish) would not support her long. Dependant on the Carters she could not and she would not be.

This was in some degree a remote evil; but petty present vexations were also pressing on her. She had never travelled by herself before—she did not even know the nearest route to B——; and to go to a strange inn, among strange waiters, and strange porters, and strange coachmen (not to speak of strange passengers) was naturally a subject of dread and anxiety to one who had never before been so circumstanced; having been so delicately brought up and lovingly attended. But there was no alternative, and having told the driver to take her to the White Lion, she was endeavouring to arrange her plans, when a call—to stop, and the almost simultaneous opening of the fly door by a man shabbily dressed, disturbed all her arrangements, filling her mind with other fears.

The voice and the features were not to be mistaken—they were those of her dreaded father; and she involuntarily shrank back into the farthest corner, compressing herself into as small a space as possible on his springing into the fly, and taking a seat beside her. He saw her alarm, and a grim smile showed that he did so.

"Don't be frightened, Kate; I mean you no harm, nay, I will do you good; but it must be in my own way, and at my own time. Where are you going? I know why you were turned out of doors; there are old fools as well as young ones."

"I am going to B ——."

"I thought as much; but you must go some where else. Your mother is ill, very ill at Cowford ; and you must go and nurse her: I can't go myself; but I can trust you. Be kind to her ; and say kind things from me, for she will like to hear them; and God knows, poor thing, she has not heard them from me as often as she should. It was a sad day for her when she became my wife, for I have brought her much evil and little good; and yet she loves me still. Poor Ann !"

For some moments he appeared lost in recollection, and his daughter was surprised at the softened expression of his features ; she had not believed him capable of so much feeling. Even when he spoke again it was not with his usual harshness ;—his ordinary reckless look and speech were tempered down so as to be less alarming to his hearer.

"You must go to Cowford directly, and not loiter by the way. You are a dutiful child, and behaved well at Swansea, though you did not much like to own me for your father, which was natural enough. I was a fool to get into that scrape ! And Herbert Eustace behaved well, too ; but for the Earl of Ermiston, your false lover, he shall rue the part he took ;—he shall sue, and not be heard;—he shall be crushed before you;—you shall triumph! you shall put your foot upon his neck! I hate him for his cowardly spirit."

"Do not hate him ! I have no wish to triumph,"

said Kate earnestly, shrinking at his tone, which had more than its usual fierceness.

"What, you love him still? Weak fool?"

"No, but I cannot wish him harm."

"No?—I tell you yes! or you would wish him harm —would seek revenge. Psha! I forget that you are not a man. Smile on a woman and she leaves you!—spurn her and she will follow through the world. You are a fool, Kate! a poor, weak fool!—so was Ann before you, poor Ann! No matter; you shall have the means of revenge, and then—you may throw them away if you will—and as you will; and become the coward's wife:—that is your look out, not mine. Do you hear! Make haste to your mother. You look doubtful, Katharine Darrell. Do you mean to dispute my bidding? I tell you plainly; you shall do my will, till I cease to bid you."

"I will do your bidding, as I should; but I know not the way to Cowford; and it is so strange to me this travelling alone."

"Oh, that is it! And you are so fond of me that you would coax me to go with you?"

Katharine turned away from the grim archness of his look and tone, shrinking closer into the corner at the loud laugh which followed the remark.

"Won't you coax me to go with you? Then you must go alone; but I'll give you directions because you are not afraid of me."

And he did give her directions, so full, so clear, as to prove him well acquainted with practical geography.

"Now go and make haste! Order the people about at the inns as if you were somebody;—be a good girl— a dutiful daughter," with another grim smile, "and it shall be the better for you."

Without waiting for a reply he jumped out of the fly, shut to the door, ordered the man to drive on, and, springing over a stile by the road side, was soon lost to view.

To order people about as though she were somebody was not at all in accordance with Katharine's nature, and

the advice had probably been given in derision ; but her gentle manner and delicate appearance won her a way through all her travelling difficulties, and enabled her to reach Cowford undevoured by porters or coachmen, and, what was still more remarkable, without the loss of any of her luggage, a fact rendered credible by her having only one trunk, and a cloak to take care of, besides herself.

CHAPTER III.

"Night spreads her mantle o'er the sky,
And all around are sleeping,
While I in tears of agony,
My restless couch am steeping.
I sigh for morn,—the rising day
Awakes the earth to gladness;
I turn with sick'ning soul away,—
It smiles upon my sadness."

DALE.

"Who comes with kindly word and smile,
With hope once more the heart to guile?"

Poor Kate! of all the places in the world, save and except Sallowfield and Beechen Cliff, Cowford was the very last that she would have visited with her own free will, under existing circumstances. Far from objecting, she would have found pleasure in going thither had she still been the petted favourite of Mrs. Arnold; but now, bankrupt in hopes, in wealth, in friends, she naturally felt some repugnance to revisit the scene of her former humiliation. Her residence with Mrs. Dixon had shown her that the world was not all as bright as she had thought —its inhabitants not all as good and kind as she had believed. She had been introduced to scandal, envy, malice, and their numerous progeny; and had been so long accustomed to be always in the wrong that she more than suspected, act as she would, her conduct would not please all the curious eyes which would be

upon her, since little Kate, for a time at least, must expect to be the talk and wonder of the village. With the mind and manners of a lady ; the fortune of a beggar ; and the nurse of a crazy mother, ridiculous in her misfortune, how was she to escape the innumerable shocks and vexations which such an unhappy combination must bring upon her? Katharine Darrell was a commonplace—a very commonplace person ;—she did what millions have done before, and will do again ; she imagined, as she thought, every vexation which could beset her, wept over the melancholy catalogue, and then, unable to devise a remedy, submitted to the infliction.

Out rushed Mr. Binks as the chaise which she had been compelled to take at the last town, no coach passing within many miles of Cowford, drove into the inn yard —out came Mrs. Binks to greet the new arrival, and help to usher her into the best parlour, both wondering, as well they might, what such a delicate, elegant creature —a lady, every bit of her, her hostess said—could purpose in coming to the King's Head at Cowford, evidently with the intention of remaining, since the chaise had been paid for, and the post-boy was instantly feed. Little did the worthy landlord and landlady think to whom they were paying such honour, bustling themselves and every one else, and making a hundred apologies for the smell of tobacco, and things being all of a caddle in the best room, just as they had apologised to Mrs. Arnold more than ten years before ; time that had bowed their forms and lessened their activity, having left the character of their minds unchanged. Mrs. Binks was still kind-hearted, bustling, curious, and fond of ruling ; Mr. Binks still willing to oblige, and submitting to be ruled. Since the tale must be told, Katharine's natural frankness induced her to avoid all appearance of concealment.

"You do not know me, Mrs. Binks," she began, addressing the landlady, who was brushing down a side-table with her apron, after having blown the dust from a clay parrot on the mantel-piece

"A brotherless *parrot* the last of its race!"

which had survived the wreck of time, and was flanked by new ornaments, instead of the old cats. "You have quite forgotten little Kate Darrell, to whom you were once so kind."

"Bless me, you little Kate Darrell!" exclaimed the staring and incredulous landlady. "Impossible! It can't be! You are a lady all over. To be sure little Kate was a good little girl, and a pretty one, too, to my mind, if she had been nicely drest; but then you look a born lady; and she was only crazy Nan's child. You are only joking with me, ma'am."

"I am not joking," replied Katharine sadly; "but am come to nurse my mother," she added, after a slight hesitation.

"Well, to be sure! who could have thought it? You to turn out such a sweet-looking lady, though so sad; not a bit like little Kate, who was the merriest child eyes ever looked upon, though she led such a life. But then I dare say you be very happy, all the same; and that is only as a lady should look. Gentlefolks must not laugh, and talk merry as we do, I have heard say; and I suppose you are very rich now. And pray, miss, how is Mrs. Arnold?—the gentlest and kindest lady I ever seed, if I may be so bold as to ax."

Katharine could hear no more. These questions and remarks, each a pang, as forcing more strongly on her mind the contrast of the present to the past, tried her beyond endurance, and a passionate burst of tears was her sole reply.

Mrs. Binks cried in sympathy, beginning to suspect something of the truth; and showed so much kindness and good feeling that Katharine explained all that it was desirable she should explain; and soon after sought her mother accompanied by her landlady, who indulged in endless expressions of wonder, surprise, and regret, that little Kate was not quite a lady, after all—at least in wealth. Nor had Katharine any cause to repent her confidence. If Mrs. Binks sometimes assumed rather

a patronizing air, advising and managing, this patronage was mingled with so much real, active kindness, and involuntary respect, that she found in her a valuable, though humble friend, ready to stand up in her defence against the envious and the malicious who quarrelled with manners and refinement so incampatible with her birth and present station; or to join in the praise bestowed by those who pitied and admired her.

And many were there among the simple villagers at Cowford who did both pity and admire, showing their good will by a thousand little acts of kindness,—moaning over her declining health, deciding that she was too gentle and too clever to live long.

Katharine found her mother better than she had expected; and, partly owing to her judicious nursing, poor Nan was soon restored to comparative health.

Some weeks had passed, and Kate sat alone at the open casement of her little room, looking out on that very green on which she had first met Mrs. Arnold. She had husbanded her little means with great frugality; but her journey down to Cowford, her necessary expenses since, sparing as she had been for herself, only purchasing luxuries for her mother, had nearly expended her scanty funds—and where might she look for more? To repay Mrs. Dixon the sum advanced at Swansea, she had received through Mrs. Carter, whilst at Stapleton, all that remained of the two hundred pounds given by Mr. Millar; and, save by the sale of a few articles, gifts from Mrs. Arnold, which it would grieve her to part with—how was she to obtain a further supply? Allowing that she would accept money from Mrs. Carter as a loan, till she could turn her talents to some account, there seemed no chance of her being put to the trial. She had written to B —— immediately on reaching Cowford, stating every particular connected with her leaving Mrs. Dixon; yet more than a month had passed, and she had received no reply. Had Mrs. Carter, to whom she had learnt to cling with an almost child-like love—her only friend on earth—had she, too, thrown her off? And was she, then, quite alone amid

a thickly-peopled world? Cared for by none? An outcast and a beggar? No tears came into her eyes as her heart told her that she was alone!—friendless!—helpless!—almost penniless! The feeling was too deep for tears; and she looked out even on that very spot where she had first met Mrs. Arnold with a dry and burning eye;—she saw the flood of sunshine resting on that verdant green—she marked the village children at their play, making dirt pies, ranging pieces of earthenware, as she had done of old—she heard their happy laughs, their merry shouts—the gladsome singing of the wild birds near;—she saw and felt all this—she saw and felt it as a mockery—and yet she did not weep!—She had ceased to weep, as she had ceased to hope! The trials of the last few months had done the work of years upon her fragile form, and on her warm and affectionate heart. She had borne up against the coldness, the harshness of the many; but she sank beneath the cruelty of the one!—she had endured Mrs. Dixon's sneers and snarls with comparative cheerfulness; but Ermiston's desertion—his open contempt—had bowed her naturally buoyant spirit; and the many disagreeables of her residence at Cowford; the nursing—the constant companionship with her poor, crazy mother—the silence of Mrs. Carter—the absolute beggary that threatened her, and her failing health—all combined to crush her to the earth.

The fanciful vagaries of her mother, now ever before her notice, pressed heavily on her sad heart; and the thought was growing that, if death should not release her soon, and save her from the doom, she, too, might be like her, a senseless wanderer. Any fate but that! rather, far rather death! there was not one to mourn her! Why should she live of use to none?—unloving and unloved! It never could be meant!—the doom of an early grave was on her—a happier doom than a long, cheerless life—a life dragged on in want and wo. Her fate was leading on to death; and she pined for the closing hour, praying that it might be ere she was

quite a beggar—pined for death with the impatient longing of a worn-out spirit, who had none to soothe it. The clinging that youth has to life was gone from her.

It was beautiful ! morally beautiful ;—to see her tender nursing of her fantastic mother, never shrinking from the meanest act of duty, though often shuddering at that mother's presence, thinking how their meeting had blighted all her hopes. It was beautiful to see her in her mourning dress, which she had never laid aside, moving about that humble room with the gentle grace of a being of high birth and breeding, catching the lowest whisper of that poor, crazy creature—waiting on her faintest wish—listening with soothing patience to the fantastic ravings of her bewildered mind ; or replying with a winning, graceful graciousness to the simple courtesies and humble kindness of her poor neighbours ;—but if a beautiful, it was a sad sight too, to look upon—to see her fading—wasting—day by day, till scarce a vestige of the loveliness of youth remained. The glowing cheek now pale and sunken—the glancing eye hollow and dim—the rounded form worn down to a mere shadow—the once bounding step now slow and feeble ;—no witching smile on the wan lip—that laugh, the very voice of joyousness, no longer heard. And it was sadder still to think that she was fading thus without one gentle word of sympathy—not one to say—"live, Katharine, for me !" She yielded to the fancy that a doom was on her—that she was scorned by all—that man marked not her misery—that heaven pitied it not; —that she must die—unwept—'unsoothed'—unmourned!

"Oh that she were at rest !"

The less her mother required her attention the stronger grew the belief of her own early death : and the more the enfeebled body aided the enfeebled mind to prey upon itself.

She turned from the open window, where all looked gay and joyous, to attend to some humble cookery on the fire ; and as she returned to her seat she paused for

a moment to gaze at herself in a small glass, not from vanity, but to mark the increasing wanness of her cheek, the daily fading of her form.

"It will soon be over, now!" she said to herself with a sad smile, if any thing so rending to the heart as that slight wreathing of the lips could be allowed to bear the name of aught so beautiful. For what so beautiful as smiles? "It will be soon over, now! and I am glad I shall be buried here—here, where she found me—here let me die—unwept—unmourned;—here pay the penalty attached to years of happiness. I had hoped to rest by her, but they would not let it be;—the beggar and the outcast must not rest beside the wealthy and the honoured. Oh, that I had died with her! Why nurse me back to life that I might bear this wo? But two years back, what was I then?—and, oh! what am I now?"

Her tearless eye glanced round the room with a sudden wildness, marking the contrast of each object there, with all that she had been accustomed to at Beechen Cliff. The many humiliations she had endured, the want of harmony between her birth and tastes, rushed on her mind with harrowing force; she started up with a low cry of pain—then sank again on her seat, hiding her face for shame, that these things should so have moved her.

The fate to which Mrs. Arnold had resolved that she should never be subjected—was her's! the fretting—the pining away of the petted and refined, amid neglect and penury. Could she have guessed on her dying bed how the Millars would fulfil their promise—could she have looked forward into time and seen the child of her love, as she was at this moment, how bitterly would she have reproached herself for her procrastination! how would her parting hours have been embittered by regret—remorse. The cherished exotic was thrust forth into the wintry air;—what wonder if it folded up its leaves to die?

We all talk of warnings against procrastination—but who heeds them?—who acts upon them?

After a time, Kate raised her head, took up her work, and tried to confine her thoughts to the task of forming some plan by which she might support herself till death should come;—it might not come as soon as she expected. She had no one but herself, except, indeed, Mrs. Binks, to look to for procuring a situation however poor: and that kind-hearted person only said—"she was so delicate like, that she was not fit for nothing."

She could not make up her mind to write to Mrs. Carter again—she could not apply to Mr. Eustace for advice, the only other person who had offered to serve her—that was impossible! even had she known his address, which she did not. He had said they should meet again — yet they had not met; and were not likely to meet;—she had no right to claim his assistance, and it was not probable that he would force it on her—it was more probable that he had never wasted a thought on her distress after distance had removed it from under his immediate observation.

It was so!—it was natural that it should be so!—He had done much for her, she had no right to expect him to do more—she had no right to blame him for forgetting her, as others had done;—and yet she did blame him—blame him more than Mrs. Carter, though she said to herself that she did not. She had less regard for him, and therefore she was less inclined to judge him kindly:—she was always ready to blame him—willing to make him pay the penalty of his cousin's selfish weakness, which his kindness had, as it were, thrown out in stronger relief. This was not right—but so it was. How often had she thought of his looks and words as he handed her into the fly.

She was thinking of them still, and half inclined to pronounce him a hypocrite, when there came a low knock at her door.

Her eyes had been so bent on her work, her thoughts, on the past and the future, that the present was completely forgotten; and she had seen no one pass through the little wicket in the front of the cottage—heard no one enter the rustic porch. Supposing it to be Mrs.

Binks, or her former playfellow, little Betty Watts, still so called, though grown a fine woman, to distinguish her from her mother, she merely said "Come in!" without rising to open the door, not even looking up till in obedience to her bidding, the latch had been raised, and some one had entered, who uttered no salutation, but stood silent before her.

It was neither Mrs. Binks nor little Betty Watts—it was he of whom she had been thinking—whom she had been so unjustly blaming—it was Herbert Eustace, standing before her with looks that told how much her care-worn face and form had pained and shocked him.

"Mr. Eustace!" exclaimed Katharine, starting up in joyful surprise, the work falling from her hands as she advanced to meet him.

"Yes, Herbert Eustace! quite unexpected I can see; but I hope not unwelcome," he replied, pressing her hand with friendly warmth.

"Oh, no! not unwelcome;—or I should be most ungrateful."

"We will not dispute as to the extent of your gratitude, as my demands I suspect might seem exorbitant; we poor barristers are obliged to become keen observers," he replied, with a half-suppressed smile, recalling to her mind the arch gaiety of his manner on their first acquaintance. "Besides, I should be the most unreasonable of the unreasonable, if I were not contented with the character you gave of me to Mrs. Carter. She really believes that I rescued you at Bristol from a fiery dragon instead of a grumbling porter; and procured you a gilded coach and six, instead of a dirty fly."

"Mrs. Carter! Have you seen her, then?"

"I have; though I had some difficulty in finding her or you, for Mrs. Dixon was silent and sulky: and had I not remembered your naming Mrs. Carter, I might not have discovered you in this lone retreat,

'Far in a wild, unknown to public view.'

I bring you a letter containing reasons for her silence, and a thousand pretty things beside ; but I will not deliver it till you have offered me a chair, and taken one yourself."

"Has Mrs. Carter really written?—and kind things? then I am not quite—"

"Forgotten and deserted ! I know that is what you mean," added her visitor, leading her to a chair, and taking one beside her. "You have moped in this lonely place till you believed yourself forlorn and desolate, without one friend; whereas, you have a thousand; for I insist on being reckoned as five hundred, and Mrs. Carter and her husband may stand for the other half; nay, besides these I have bespoken many more for you; I have indeed, surprised as you appear, and mean to carry you away with me to-morrow, or the next day at the furthest, and introduce you as my *protégée*."

Kate shook her head, though trying to smile at his gaiety, assumed to spare her feelings and his own ; and to win her from her sadness.

"No shaking of the head, Miss Darrell, the thing is doomed. Mrs. Carter has appointed me your guardian, and I have joined her in the trust, just for decorum sake."

"Then I am to have no choice."

"None: you are not of age, and must submit. Poor, dear Mrs. Carter ! as the lamenting say, whether the departed was an angel or virago. I intend her to be Mrs. Eustace hereafter, of which I gave due notice to her husband, who, nearly as kind-hearted a creature as his wife, promised to die at a convenient time, leaving a particular request that I should succeed him. If you had but seen us flirting together the other night you would have been amazed."

"Mrs. Carter flirt!" exclaimed Katharine, lured into a smile.

"Yes, Mrs. Carter flirt! notwithstanding your incredulity : and when I taxed her with being in love with me, instead of a flat contradiction, and a drawing up of

her stately neck, she only pursed up her mouth a little, and admitted that I was a very kind, delightful young gentleman. Not to be vain, I doubt if any one else could have tempted her to the like impropriety ; but I pique myself on accomplishing what some would consider impossibilities. I intend you within a few months to be the joyous, hopeful Katharine Darrell of our former days—or something very like it."

"Oh, no! that can never be!"

"Yes, but it can! and it shall be, in spite of those clasped hands and that sad look. Have I tempted the formal Mrs. Carter to a flirtation, and yet you deny my power?"

"You may do much; but you cannot do that."

"I have set my heart on achieving the point; and it must be achieved."

"Do not think it—do not hope it. Can you give me back her whom I have lost? Can you give me parents for whom I need not blush? tastes suited to my humble fortunes? or ignorance of the world's opinion? Can you give back the hope, the trust of early youth?—those hopes undimmed by doubt—that trust unchilled by thought of change? You cannot do all this,—and I can never be again the joyous, hopeful Katharine Darrell. The mocking of the world has reached my ear! The changing of the heart hath fallen on my heart. The misty beauty of life's early dawn, its fancied loveliness, hath passed away; reality hath come around me with its sadness and its gloom. I am wiser—but not happier; and the heart unlearns not what it once has learnt."

Herbert rose—walked to the window—seemed to look out, and then resumed his seat.

"I came hither, Miss Darrell, determined to be gay, and you will not let it be. I came to boast my powers, and you mock my vanity, taxing those powers beyond mortal strength. If I cannot create—I can repair. Oh! I am an admirable tinker! mending the holes

'The wear and tear of life doth make.'

If I cannot absolutely unlearn the heart, I can teach it so many new and beautiful things, that its old learning shall grow musty from disuse. Not many minutes since I met a little girl, she was crying piteously, as if her heart were breaking, and she could never smile again. I coaxed her out of the story of her wo.—A great big boy had broken her pet play-thing—I gave her the means to replace it; and there she is out on that sunny green—as sunny as that green. Only hark to her joyous laugh, barefooted, and bareheaded as she is. You see I have brought smiles for tears."

"She is but a child. I was like her once, all hope and joyousness—it was the joyousness of ignorance?—There, on that very green, I first saw Mrs. Arnold. Would you say that I am still a child?"

"No; you might be affronted; and you have not the simple trust of childhood; you will not believe my words."

"I place trust in your kindness—I believe in your sincerity; but I no longer think, like a child, that I may catch the stars which seem bending down to earth. I now know that as I advance they will recede; in a word, I am grown old of late—very old!"

"Old in suspicion, and thus old in sorrow; but suspicion is not always wisdom. You thought Mrs. Carter had forgotten you—you thought my parting words were idle words, the sudden ebullition of a transient pity:—you have doubted the sincerity of real friends, believing, as all sceptics do, that doubt is wisdom;—and, having raised the demon, you have nursed and fostered it till you have bowed beneath its mastery. Can you deny this?"

She turned away from his keen gaze. She had thought his words were idle words.

"Now I mean to subdue this demon suspicion, and free you from his thraldom."

"Can you teach me to forget?"

"I can do nothing whilst you look at me so sadly—you unman me—you make me feeble as yourself. I dare

not tell you for my manhood's sake, how much I feel for you. I strive for gaiety to hide my weakness, and you think it levity. I do not blame you for this doubt, I only pity, and would win you back to hope. You shake your head at the bare word—you say within yourself he is a man—he can struggle with the world and worldlings—struggle and subdue;—he does not know what feeble woman suffers—he thinks my trials very light. I do not think your trials light—I have felt—I do feel them to be great. With your feelings and your tastes, the living with that woman must have been torture worthy of the inquisition—and then her insolent dismissal! Mrs. Carter and I have determined to put her in the pillory the first opportunity."

"How did you know?".

"How did I know, indeed?—as if a guardian does not know every thing concerning his ward. Patty, the maid, told me a most pathetic history, which Mrs. Carter confirmed from your letter. I behaved uncommonly well, I assure you, notwithstanding your incredulity; had only one good laugh at your robbing the old lady of her lover, and then was duly indignant at her insolence, and the blunt captain's presumption. Mrs. Carter declares that we cried together whilst discussing your wrongs, but this, of course, I stoutly deny. Now, there is little use in feeling for a sorrow, if one does not try to lighten it;—it is of no avail to see the hole in the kettle, if one does not know how to mend it. I felt for the sorrow, and resolved to lighten it. I have found out the hole, and am come to mend it. Within a year you shall admit me to be the best tinker in all his majesty's dominions."

She could not but smile at his gaiety, assumed to disperse her gloom; but the smile was sickly, and did not please him. He paused a moment, and then spoke in a different tone:—

"I am not unfeeling, do not think it. I am shocked to see you here," glancing round the humble room, "to see how you are changed—grieved that I cannot place

you as I would in that station which befits you—that I cannot encircle you with the elegancies, the watchful care to which you were so long accustomed. I am no longer Sir Herbert Eustace: and I, too, have felt something of the world's changing, as you know. Unable to do all I would, I have done all I could; but I fear to agitate you by referring to the past; I fear to submit my project to your notice lest you should disapprove of it. I am afraid you do not think me sufficiently your friend to believe that I would shrink from nothing which could save you pain."

"You wrong me, Mr. Eustace; I cannot doubt your kindness. Speak; I am stronger than you think;—not so easily moved."

"I hope it may prove so. For a moment I would speak of her whom you have lost, to show why I claim a right to serve you. I was in no good mood when I last met Mrs. Arnold,—I could have quarrelled with any one—I longed to quarrel with some one—she soothed, she rebuked with a gentle kindness which I could neither resist nor resent. There was in the softness, the repose of her gentle spirit, a something peculiarly beautiful and touching to one of my quick temper; and her warning and advice were not forgotten, and I hope not neglected. I bade her look upon me as a friend, ever willing, ever eager to fulfil her wishes in regard to you or to herself. She believed and thanked me, thus accepting the pledge. She is no more; but her adopted child still lives. Will Miss Darrell refuse that service accepted by Mrs. Arnold?"

"No, no;" said Katharine, holding out her hand, and bursting into tears, the first tears which she had shed for many a day.

"Forgive me that I have made you weep; yet I would rather see those tears than that look of dull despair, which so shocked me when I entered. This hand is a pledge that you accept me as a friend, a brother, and a guardian:—for you are but a child still, though you fancy yourself an old woman," he added with a

smile. "Once I had other thoughts and hopes;—and once—but they are past:—forget them—you shall hear of them no more. And now for my project; to which I give you leave to object if you will, only insisting on your believing that I would do better if I could. The gossips will not admit of my asking you to superintend my petty establishment, or I might be tempted to try if I could not outdo Mrs. Dixon in the art of tormenting; besides Mrs. Carter would object, so I must place my ward in some other situation. Now, I have a dear little creature of a cousin, with something of your own warm heart and buoyant spirits, though sobered down by constant illness; with a plain, noble-minded husband, who feels more than he says, which is as well, seeing that he says but little; and a fairy of a girl, my wife that is to be, who begins to ask many questions which mamma has not always health to answer. Then my little wife, though one of the most witching little beings imaginable, and doting on her husband, as in duty bound, has been a little spoilt, so I want to coax you to go to Farnley Lodge, and make her just like yourself. Mrs. Colvin's health being very delicate, she will be delighted to have some one to receive and entertain her guests, as well as answer Clara's questions; and I expect very shortly to receive thanks, a piece of plate, and a dinner for having introduced you to each other. I cannot restore her who is gone—I cannot make you as you were; but I can promise every kindness from my cousin—her regard and esteem you will soon acquire for yourself. This letter will explain her wishes. The duties of my profession prevented my seeing my cousin immediately after I parted with you; and when all was arranged with her I spent many days in seeking you. They were not idle words that I said at parting—we have met again, and I will hope under a brighter sky."

"Then I am not deserted—not friendless! How very sinful I have been! my fretfulness and murmuring rise up against me, and condemn me. Such rich blessings for so many years, and yet to doubt God's providence and care! I do not deserve this kindness,

Mr. Eustace;—not from you—not from any," exclaimed the weeping Katharine, self rebuked for her late despair.

"There would be far greater wo than there is in the world already,-if we had all our deservings ; in that case I fear I should be denied the pleasure of introducing you to my cousin. Your trials have been hard for one so young ; but we will hope for brighter days, or should other trials come, do not let us, by doubting and mistrusting, barb and poison the arrows of misfortune. You may well smile at my tutoring you in this manner—I, who have learnt the lesson so recently myself, and so imperfectly ; but those who know the least, and have learned that little lately, are ever the most inclined to teach, so I am but natural ; and you will excuse my playing guardian and advising."

"Not excuse, but thank you ; I have, indeed, been very wrong."

"It is not for me to say so, who wasted wealth and time, and then rebelled when that wasted wealth was taken from me. The world said I bore my loss as a philosopher—I did not bear it as a Christian. The world saw only the smiling lip—heard only the merry jest ;—it did not see how I writhed in secret at the change my loss had wrought—how I pined for those very flatteries which I had once pretended to despise. I owe Mrs. Arnold much ;—I should not have borne a rebuke less gentle, less affectionate ; then I despised others—I have since learned to despise myself, and thus regard mankind more justly. He who feels his own deficiencies will be a charitable judge for his own sake, so you see mine is but a more refined selfishness after all," he added with a smile. "Here have I, under pretence of lecturing you, been boasting of my own wisdom ; yet am I the most unwise of creatures after all, suffering you to weep and dim the lustre of those speaking eyes, when I have set my heart on seeing them dance again in brightness, as they used to do. I described you to my cousin as of happy temper, and of sunny mind, and for my sake, you must not belie my

words. 'Ah! Herbert,' said my saucy cousin, 'how much of this may I believe! I know you of old; never man wove such pretty tales, despite Messrs. Bell and Bampton.' Fie upon you, Mary, replied I thus, to throw in my teeth my former crimes. I have ceased telling good stories since I ceased to be a baronet; you may believe every word I say.—'You do not even exaggerate, Herbert?'—Mary, I am affronted, and will say no more. See Miss Darrell—know her—and then if you convict me, though only of exaggeration, inflict what penalty you choose—if you acquit me, I inflict the punishment. So really, Miss Darrell, you must hush those sobs, and call back your brightest smiles to preserve my honour. Surely you will not condemn me to a penance?"

"Not willingly!" said Katharine, smiling through her tears; "but you have been too bold, I cannot—"

"Yes, you can"—interrupting her, "that April smile would win a verdict in my favour any where. It is all settled; and you go with me to Farnley Lodge to-morrow."

"So soon?"

"Ay, I was afraid you would think me impatient and arbitrary; but I am a man of business now, not an idle man of pleasure; briefs are pouring in upon me; and I am sure their lordships, the judges, have a peculiar pleasure in listening to my pleading; so that I cannot control my movements as I would. Mrs. Carter, owing to the sudden illness of her husband, not being able to become your escort, as she had intended, has made me her deputy, and I am not only anxious to introduce you to my cousin myself, but desirous of taking you from this lonely spot to other scenes, and other air, for you are changed—sadly changed, although it may seem rude to say so. I could put off the journey another day, though I would rather not. What say you?"

"Oh! to-morrow, as it suits you;—and yet—"

"Yet what? A ward should tell all her troubles to her guardians.

She hesitated, looking embarrassed; and he laughed.

"A lady's reason for delay, I'll wager my next brief. Crape, muslin, and silk, are not quite *à la mode*, and you wish to consult the milliner. Lay the blame on me; and I will maintain that you are above all the frivolities of your sex."

"Then wager and lose," said Katharine with a laugh almost as light as his own. "I never thought of crape, muslin, or silk, and you have done most unwisely in raising such an objection to a speedy departure, for I am by no means above the frivolities of my sex. It was not of my dress I thought—it was of my mother, she added, her sudden gaiety changed into sadness and embarrassment. "She may object to my going. And did you tell your cousin of my poor mother?"

"I told her all—every thing—convinced that I but anticipated your wishes, and anxious to engage my cousin's sympathy and kindness. You do not blame me?"

"No; I thank you. I would have all known, though I shrink from telling it. I am a poor, sinful creature. What am I that I should feel ashamed to own my parents? My trials have not checked my pride."

Before her hearer could reply the latch was raised, and crazy Nan herself entered the room. Not perceiving Herbert she had no temptation to display her dress or fancied dignity; and one idea seemed so to occupy her mind as to leave no room for pretty vanities; whilst she spoke with a greater clearness of purpose than she had ever shown before.

"I have seen him, and he has been very kind to me; but we are going away directly, so you must help me pack."

"Whom have you seen?" asked the wondering Kate.

"James, to be sure;—who else would I go with? But you must make haste, for he can't wait—he never could. Come;—come, and pack," urged crazy Nan, pulling her fretfully by the sleeve.

Katharine ventured a hasty glance at Herbert; she

saw pity but no disgust—no ridicule; and ashamed of her own shame, she looked boldly up.

"I will come and pack for you directly;—but you do not want me to go with you?"

"You go with us? No, no, poor child; it would not be fitting for you; you are a lady:—not but what I am one, too." she added with a toss of the head. "But I can't stay here answering you, for James is in a great hurry."

As she turned to go into the other room she fronted Herbert, and, in the confusion of her ideas, taking him for Lord Ermiston, began making him innumerable courtesies, calling him my lord, and asking him when he would make Kate a lady—promising to be at the wedding.

Poor Katharine felt all the awkwardness of her situation, without the means of avoiding it; but Herbert answered her crazy mother so kindly, so judiciously, that she thought she could never forgive herself for her ingratitude on former occasions.

"You must not keep me talking here. James sent you this, Kate; and you can read it whilst I get my things. I don't want you," she said, waving her back after giving her the note, "I don't want you," she repeated, muttering in a low tone as she left the room—"She would ask for some of my clothes; but she can't have them:—she'll have enough of her own soon."

Katharine opened her father's note with anticipations of evil; but they were not realized. He only advised her to go to the Carter's if she had found no other home, promising that she should not be the worse for having nursed her mother as he had bade.

She was still conversing with her visitor concerning the note, when Nan returned with a dirty bundle in one hand, and an equally dirty bonnet in the other, adorned with a daggled red feather.

"There, Kate, I give you that for nursing me; and I would not give it any one else," said Nan, trying to place the bonnet on her head, an honour which Katharine declined, drawing quickly back.

"Oh! you want the gown instead; but you can't have it," she exclaimed, holding the bundle tighter, "you will have plenty of gowns soon, when you are a lady; and so shall I. You are a good child, Kate; I always loved you; and you have nursed me very kindly, so you shall be a lady anyhow. Good bye! Good bye, my lord," courtesying to Herbert with mock dignity, adding, with a familiar nod as she was closing the door, "I'll be sure to be at the wedding."

"This removes every obstacle to your going to Farnley Lodge," remarked Herbert, who was the first to rouse himself from the reverie into which both had sunk on the departure of Nan Darrell.

"It does; and I shall be ready and happy to accompany you to-morrow, only fearing—"

"You must fear nothing," he said, interrupting her.

The requisite details were soon arranged, and Herbert rose to take leave, anxious to return to the next town, where he had a commission to execute for Mr. Colvin. Katharine accompanied him to the wicket, and both stood some moments looking out on the sunny green, and the merry children all at play. How different were Kate's feelings now to what they had been but one short hour before. The sunshine and the laughter were no longer mockeries. She no longer felt herself an outcast: hope and gratitude were her's again—and with these who can be miserable?

"I am half tempted to a romp myself. What say you, Miss Darrell?" asked Herbert, gaily amused at the gambols of the happy children.

"I am afraid Mrs. Carter would be shocked, though it would not be the first time on the same spot," said Katharine, half smiling and half sighing. "I was playing here when dear Mrs. Arnold found me. After many years I returned, the child become the woman; as poor, but not as happy. I cannot tell you how I hated the freshness of that green—how I shuddered at those merry laughs, which seemed as insults to my breaking heart. When shall I stand here again? and with what feelings?"

"With feelings bright as that green itself, is my prediction; you are changed for the better already. But if you will not romp for fear of Mrs. Carter, though I would promise not to tell, I must be gone. Adieu till to-morrow: and then sighs and tears shall be left at Cowford;—I will have only smiles. My veracity is staked for your being as you were, not as you are."

Her shake of the head by no means spoke such decided dissent as before—it was doubtful, rather than peremptory; and when he marked how she smiled upon him through her tears, trying in vain to speak her thanks, and met her animated look of gratitude, so changed did she appear from the wan, faded, and despairing being which had at first so shocked him, that he hoped to see her restored to what she had been on their first acquaintance, allowing only for her increase of age.

Some faces owe their beauty and their power to the feelings of the heart, the impulse of the moment; and thus it was with Katharine Darrell. Without her intelligent mind, her warm and grateful heart to illuminate her features, those features would have been only remarkable as possessing an air of elegance.

Mrs. Carter's silence was accounted for, by her absence from home, and a neglect in forwarding the letter. She regretted her inability to accompany Kate to Farnley Lodge—said much evil of Mrs. Dixon, and more good of Mr. Eustace, who had taken so much trouble to find her out, wondering how she could have thought him a wild young man, as she had done at Sallowfield;—hoped she would be comfortable with Mrs. Colvin; and then, after various hopes and fears, advice to take care of herself, and be particular as to having her clothes aired, &c., &c., she made a thousand excuses for sending a purse of her own making, containing a trifle, thinking Miss Darrell might find it useful; and trusting that she would not be offended.

Mrs. Colvin's letter had rather the kindness of a friend, than the mere politeness of a stranger. She spoke feelingly and highly of Mrs. Arnold, with whom her mother

had been acquainted in former days, and pressed Katharine to come and see for herself whether she liked Farnley Lodge and its inhabitants. Should they be mutually pleased, the terms of her permanent residence could be easily arranged.

How did Katharine reproach herself for her doubts, her despair, and her former ingratitude to Herbert!

CHAPTER IV.

The present—the actual—were they our all—
Too heavy our burden, too hopeless our thrall,
But heaven that spreadeth o'er all its blue cope,
Hath given us mem'ry,—hath given us hope!

L. E. L.

With the assistance of Mrs. Binks, Katharine's arrangements were soon completed; and early the following morning she quitted Cowford, more hopeful, more happy, than she had been for many, many months.

"There is Farnley Lodge," remarked Herbert to his companion, as the carriage, which had been sent to meet them, drove through the last gate. "I insist on your thinking it a very cheerful looking place, not sublime; there is a something chilling about the sublime—we admire it, but we do not love it. It is like one of the rich, hooped, and brocaded dresses of our grandmothers, very grand, but rather stiff—not fit for every day use. What think you of my lecture on the sublime?—being delivered gratis you are bound to be charitable in your judgment, and must not pronounce it unpoetical. I verily believe you have not heard one word of it, your thoughts being engaged in anticipating the terrors of a presentation to my cousin. Confess, and make a humble apology."

"Will you forgive me if I do?"

"I cannot refuse, you ask so prettily; but a second offence will not be so easily pardoned. Here, we are arrived."

"You are fatigued. Would you like to rest a little before you see my cousin, though believe me she is ready to meet you as a friend?" he said as they crossed the hall, finding that she trembled at the approaching meeting.

"Thank you; but I would rather have it over. You must think me very silly;—you do not know how few have met me kindly since Mrs. Arnold's death."

"Poor thing!" thought Herbert, soothing her fears, and contrasting her present demeanour with her manner on their first acquaintance; she had not then encountered unkindness; and she never expected it. He had written to prepare his cousin for the alteration which grief had made in her appearance, and doubted not that her pity would be enlisted in her favour.

"Here, Mary, I have guarded Miss Darrell with all care, and promised that you will make her a pet, till she shall be herself again; and then we will both scold her for thinking you a very terrific personage."

"Not so, Herbert, for how should Miss Darrell have learnt to regard me as terrific, but by your description. I am not at all an appalling person, I do assure you, whatever that wicked Herbert may have said," replied his cousin, taking both her hands kindly in her's, and then seating herself beside her. "We will be good friends at once, and defy his malice."

"My malice, Mary! I have not a spark in my whole composition—have I, Miss Darrell?" asked he gaily, seeing that tears were gathering in her eyes, overcome by the kind manner of Mrs. Colvin, a pleasing looking woman, with the appearance, as well as the reality of delicate health.

"I should be most ungrateful if I did not say—no," replied Katharine, striving to master her emotion.

"Victory! Victory! There, Mary! and here comes Clara to crown me victor. Come hither, miss, they are scolding your husband."

"Oh! but they shan't scold dear cousin Herbert," cried a beautiful girl, about five years of age, springing into his arms, and clinging round his neck.

"A dutiful and affectionate wife, ready to defend her husband, as all wives should be—should they not, Colvin?" said Herbert, addressing that gentleman, who entered at the moment.

"To be sure!" he replied with a quiet smile.

"There, Mrs. Colvin! I hope you will take the hint," remarked her laughing cousin, returning the caresses of the child. "See, Clara, I have brought a lady home with me, whom you must learn to love very much. Go, and tell her that you will."

"No, I won't go! and I won't love her!" replied the child, in a tone between passion and sulkiness, keeping her face turned away from Katharine.

"Fie, Clara! Why will you not go to Miss Darrell?" asked her mother, coaxing instead of reproving her.

"I won't go to her, because she is to teach me my letters—and I won't learn them;—and I won't love her, because she is to be my governess; and I don't like to have one," replied the child, raising her head and speaking with passionate boldness.

"You will think better of it by and by, Clara; in the mean time shall I show you your room, Miss Darrell?" said Mrs. Colvin, vexed at this exhibition of Clara's wilfulness, but too indulgent to reprove her, taking Katharine away that she might not be further hurt by the child's rudeness.

After a hasty introduction to Mr. Colvin, Katharine followed his lady, with the painful conviction that her presence was rather submitted to than desired by her host;—totally repugnant to his spoiled child;—and not as welcome to the mother, since the openly avowed dislike of her darling.

Herbert guessed the truth from her manner of returning Mr. Colvin's formal bow, and began to fear that in his zeal to serve her he might only subject her to fresh vexations; but he had learnt the value of perseverance, and would not yield without a struggle.

No sooner had the door closed than he put down the child, refusing to take her up again, though she implored him to do so, clinging round his knees.

"No, Clara, I am not to be coaxed; you are naughty, and I will have nothing to do with you till you feel sorry, and say so. You are undutiful, you will not learn your letters as your kind papa and mamma both wish; you have refused to do as you were told; and you have been very rude to a stranger. I have told you the naughtiness of all this before, and you promised to behave better; but I see no amendment. Go away, I will have nothing to say to you."

The child drew back with a proud toss of the head, stamping in rage as she exclaimed—

"I hate the nasty lady! I won't have a governess! I'll beat her if she comes near me."

"She will not come near you, depend upon it, whilst you are naughty; I am shocked and grieved to see you in such a passion. Who told you that the lady was to be your governess?"

"Martin; and Martin says that she will make me read in a great book, and not let me run about; but I won't read in a book; and I will run about."

"I hope to hear that you do as your mamma tells you; Miss Darrell is not your governess yet; and no one wishes to prevent your running about. If you choose to remain a dunce, and not learn to read, no one will regret this hereafter so much as yourself."

"I won't learn," replied Clara doggedly, her lips quivering, her cheeks crimsoning with passion, and seemingly in doubt whether to set up a tremendous cry or not.

"You had better send the child to her mother, Eustace; or leave her alone. We shall have a cry presently, and I hate a cry," observed Mr. Colvin.

"So do I; but giving way to a child's passion is not the best method to cure her of the habit.

Clara began to whimper, as if to threaten her father into a stronger interference in her favour.

"If you cry, Clara, I take you to the nursery on the

instant," said Herbert firmly; then going with Mr. Colvin into the next room he asked his permission to manage the child on this occasion, adding—"you know how much I love her."

Mr. Colvin did not refuse, but it was evident that he was not in a good humour; something had annoyed him, and what that something was Herbert guessed from his saying—"You think Mary and I spoil the child, but really Clara is better than most children; only a little wilful now and then, as all children will be; and I do not see what good a governess will do her, particularly since she has taken such a dislike to her; besides she may interfere between man and wife, governesses are apt to do so."

Herbert coloured, hesitated a moment, and then spoke with his usual frankness.

"I see, Colvin, that you either yielded your consent at first with reluctance, or have repented it since; and will not hold you bound by any previous conversation. Esteeming Miss Darrell as I do, I thought her presence would prove pleasurable to all, considering Mary's health, consequent frequent inability to entertain her guests, or look after Clara; but if you think otherwise the point is settled. She was invited for a month on the footing of a friend, to remain or depart at the end of that time as all might wish; I am sure you will grant her your kindness and hospitality till then, and join with me in endeavouring to procure her some suitable situation. I have no home to offer her; and, as you know, she is without a friend, poor thing."

"Poor thing?" echoed Mr. Colvin with the more pity, as she was not to be forced upon him as a governess, a character he held in dread. "Poor thing! she shall remain here till we have found her some situation, and depend on our doing all we can to make her happy and comfortable."

"I was sure you would say this; and I am equally sure that you will be marked in your kindness, for she is very sensitive, particularly since her misfortunes, and the many slights which they have brought upon her;—

she felt your bow was cold. I will explain your views, though it will be rather awkward, and trust to your manner to banish all her scruples as to remaining your guest."

Mr. Colvin thought it would be very awkward, and rejoiced that the task was not to fall on him.

"You seem very anxious about this girl; I hope you have no intention of making her Mrs. Eustace.

"None whatever. I am a rejected lover; and moreover, have no ambition to become the object of a second attachment, particularly having seen all the details of the first. Mrs. Arnold showed me kindness when others scorned me, and accepted my half jesting, half earnest offers of service for herself and her favourite. I do not hold myself called on to repair all Ermiston's errors, heaven forbid! But in this instance I would strive to do so. His conduct to Miss Darrell must have deeply pained her; and not only did it throw her upon my protection, but caused the most violent quarrel in which our cousinly dislike has ever indulged. Though a fear of ridicule prevents his making her his bride, he loves her still, in his way; and was jealous of the interference to which his own moral cowardice compelled me. I am, besides, much interested in Miss Darrell for her own sake, but have not one lover-like feeling whilst rendering her a service, though the world, could it hear but half what I have said to you and Mary, would be sure to anticipate a wedding. I am a refutation of the French author's assertion, that love cannot subside into friendship, and am sometimes surprised at the complete change which her rejection has caused in my feelings. I now only look upon her with the kindly regard of a brother, and have so fully succeeded in convincing her of the absence of every warmer feeling, that she accepts all my attentions in the same spirit in which they are offered. We meet and we part without the slightest embarrassment on either side; and few things would afford me greater pleasure than, as a brother, to give her away at the altar to some one worthy of her."

"I can no longer doubt, you argue the point so

very cooly ; and I am glad it is as it is ; for, though Miss Darrell may be very amiable, her parentage would naturally be an insurmountable obstacle to many. I do not wonder at Lord Ermiston's breaking off the engagement ; and you, too, ought to look for birth and fortune."

"I hope to make a fortune, and win the power of a choice without reference to wealth."

"Ay, I know you are a little romantic and independent ; but I yet hope to see you the husband of some woman with birth and fortune."

"And I hope to become the husband of some woman of worth and sense ; with heart to love me—mind to understand me—and tastes in harmony with mine."

Mr. Colvin, a plain, prose man in speech and thought, though his affection for his wife had unconsciously some tinge of the romantic, shook his head with one of those provoking smiles which say—you are young, and will mend of this folly.

How I hate those smiles ! I would rather be told in plain language I was a downright idiot, than meet one of those withering, mocking smiles ; but I conclude Herbert Eustace had not the same horror of them that I have, for, without appearing in the least ruffled or annoyed, he merely answered by a look anticipatory of future triumph.

"Mary and I will be all kindness to your *protégee* but how Clara is to be propitiated I know not ; that maid tells her more things than she should, and I am afraid she will make Miss Darrell feel uncomfortable, unless we can coax her into good humour," observed Mr. Colvin after a little further discussion.

"Pardon me ; my wife must be brought up to submission, not rebellion ; must be taught to see her errors and ask pardon, not coaxed out of her ill humour. Leave her to me, and she will say no more rude things to Miss Darrell."

Mr. Colvin shrugged his shoulders with another incredulous smile, observing—"I cannot bear to hear the child cry."

"I hope you will not hear her cry ; at least not one

of those terrific cries, amounting to a howl, which she occasionally employs to obtain her will. You know I advocate the rule of reason, not of force.

"You will not get Clara to beg Miss Darrell's pardon to-day, at least."

"We shall see," replied his guest.

When Katharine re-entered the room, the child was where she liked best to be, on dear cousin Herbert's knee, one little arm placed round his neck, the other hand holding one of his. There were evident marks that tears had been, but there were no tears then; and the rosy cheek and the laughing eye were fast recovering their beauty, though a thoughtful look and an occasional sigh appeared to intimate that her cares had not all departed.

She got off his knee when Katharine was seated, advanced a step towards her; then turned to Herbert, looked pleadingly in his face, and asked him to go with her. He kissed her with an encouraging smile, and holding her hand led her up to Katharine. She hesitated a moment; her little chest heaved, and the tears stood on the long lashes, but cousin Herbert's kind words again gave her courage, though she spoke in a low voice without venturing to look up.

"I am very sorry to have been so rude, and hope you will forgive me."

There was something so touching in the submission of this beautiful spoilt and high-spirited child—a submission evidently costing her much, and won by kindness, not by harshness, that Katharine, folding the little creature in her arms, caressed and soothed her, promising forgiveness, and wiping away the child's tears, perfectly unconscious that her own were falling all the time.

Clara looked up surprised at caresses so unexpected; her shame and terror vanished—putting her arms round Katharine's neck, she whispered, "I'll love you very much," and then, after a low sob or two, the remains of her late emotion, nestled quietly in her lap, instead of returning to cousin Herbert, as she had stipulated.

Mrs. Colvin cried outright, a folly that might be excused in a doting mother—Herbert had a sudden desire to look out of the window, and plain, prose Mr. Colvin uttered an impatient "Psha!" at finding that he had completely lost the train of the calculation on which he had been employed.

"Don't cry! I love you, and cousin Herbert shall love you; and papa and mamma," said little Clara, generous, affectionate, in spite of all her spoiling and occasional bursts of passion. "Don't cry!" she repeated, kissing Katharine as she spoke.

"I am quite ashamed; I was not aware that I had been so silly," exclaimed poor Katharine, colouring and confused, yet returning the child's caress as it deserved.

"Do not apologize, my dear Miss Darrell, I love you all the better for those tears," said Mrs. Colvin, her mother's heart completely won.

Herbert explained the terms on which Katharine was to remain at Farnley Lodge so kindly, and adroitly, that she felt no scruples which were not speedily overcome by the sudden fondness of Clara, and the kindness of her parents; and when he took his departure two days after, he left his ward, as he playfully called her, much pleased with her temporary home; and not more anxious for the future than might be excused to one in her situation.

No engagement for Katharine had been found at the end of the month, though Mr. and Mrs. Colvin had at first really exerted themselves to procure one; but she had no hesitation in remaining at Farnley Lodge till further exertions had been used, thus pleasing herself, her host and hostess, and little Clara, by no means an unimportant person.

Herbert ran down to them when he could snatch the time from his professional duties, sure of meeting a welcome; but the increasing number of his briefs—the nursing an invalid friend, and other employments, after some months prevented his visits to the Colvin's being as frequent as he and they desired.

CHAPTER V.

I dreamt of my lady—I dreamt of her grief—
I dreamt that her lord was a barbarous chief.

"O'Connor's child I was the bud
Of Erin's royal tree of glory;
But wo to those who steep'd in blood
The tissue of my story."

CAMPBELL.

MONTHS on months had elapsed since Katharine's arrival at Farnley Lodge and yet she was still there. How many plans are formed! how few are executed!

"I have news which will please you and Clara," said Mrs. Colvin, who was lying on a sofa reading a letter, whilst Miss Darrell was piecing out a puzzle for the child's amusement, and Mr. Colvin writing in a distant part of the room. "Herbert will be here to-day; and if we pet him sufficiently, he says he may be tempted to remain a fortnight."

"I am so glad! it is an age since he was here, and I long to tell him how very, very happy I am," exclaimed the grateful Katharine, with the open joyousness of younger days.

Mrs. Colvin smiled; read more of the letter, and then observed, but not as gaily as before; "Here is a confused sentence about you, which I can make neither head nor tale of. He seems to have heard that some situation has been offered to your acceptance—expresses

doubts as to what your decision should be, yet appears to intimate that it would be prudent to accept it. I never knew him express himself so vaguely ; and have no idea what he means !"

Katharine's happy look lost half its brightness.

He must mean old Lady Dumblany's offer," observed Mr. Colvin, rising and reading the confused passage over his wife's shoulder. "I do not know why he should think it prudent to accept it, for her temper is enough to weary any one to death. You cannot go, Katharine, I do not know how we could part with you; we should miss you so very much. Clara never cries now ; and you manage the house so admirably, and entertain the visitors so well, that Mary has nothing to worry her ; and is better than she has been for years."

"You cannot go, Katharine ; we should not know what to do without you now we have felt your worth. You have cured Clara of being wilful without making her stupid or sad ; and always seem so happy yourself that it makes others the same only to look at you," echoed Mrs. Colvin.

"You must not go ; cousin Herbert shan't take you away," cried little Clara with tears in her eyes, clinging round her as if to detain her.

"What can I say ?" asked Katharine with a faltering voice.

"Why, say that you will stay, if you like us," observed Mr. Colvin bluntly.

"Surely you cannot wish to leave us, when we all love you so much ; even my matter-of-fact husband, of whose partiality I am half jealous," added his wife, looking up in his face with a smile to thank him for joining in what he knew to be her wish.

"Don't go, and I'll be so good," pleaded the clinging Clara, concluding with a return of her former wilfulness —"you shan't go."

"Indeed, I have no wish to go—I am so happy here! Do with me as you will—I know not how to thank you for your kindness," faltered Katharine, smiling through her tears.

"You have nothing to thank me for; as Mary says, it makes one happy to look at you," said Mr. Colvin, turning back to his writing, having a perfect horror of anything resembling a scene.

"Dear Katharine is always to stay, and teach me to be good and clever," exclaimed the delighted Clara, hugging her mother, and then her father, to the detriment of his writing, and at the risk of producing the scene which he dreaded, ending with innumerable caresses to her favourite, and the declaration that she would scold cousin Herbert well for thinking of taking dear Katharine away.

Thus, in spite of old Lady Dumblany, and young Mr. Eustace, was Katharine established in perpetuity at Farnley Lodge, at the earnest entreaties of the very three who had once so strongly opposed her continued residence; her strict principles, her fascinating manners, and her sunny temper having, as Herbert had expected, won her the regard of all.

"Where is Miss Darrell?" asked Herbert, after paying his *dévoirs* to his cousin and her husband.

"I expect her back every moment from a romping expedition with Clara, who dotes upon her. She is very anxious to see you"

"Anxious to see me! Does she wish to consult me?"

"Oh, no! that point is settled without consulting you, so you need not look so alarmed and foolish. It was carried *nem. con.*, as you gentlemen say to puzzle us poor ignorant women. But, bless me, Herbert, how vexed and disappointed you look, turning white and then red. I am sorry you wish her to go to Lady Dumblany, though why I cannot imagine, she being most assuredly a descendant of the furies, though I have never seen the genealogical tree. The truth is, we all declared at once that we could not live without Kate; she does every thing for every body, and her smile, as you used to say, is absolute sunshine; even my sober husband was quite sentimental on the subject, and Clara threatens

you with a great scolding for wishing to send her dear, dear Katharine to cross old Lady Dumblany."

"I never wished to send Miss Darrell to Lady Dumblany. What do you mean, Mary ?"

"Rather what do you mean, Herbert ? What else could you intend by that very unintelligible paragraph of yours ? No other situation has been heard of, indeed we have long tacitly ceased to look for one, aware that we could ill spare her. I am sure you must be in love, or you would never have written anything so contradictory and incomprehensible."

"Nonsense ! I was hurried ;—you forget how much my time is occupied," replied her cousin quickly, as if not pleased with the charge of being in love, or being incomprehensible ; and yet his look had cleared within the last few moments.

"I do really believe you are in love, you look so conscious," persisted his cousin, while Mr. Colvin asked of his prospects, congratulating him on his increasing fame and fortune.

"I hear all speak of you as a rising young man ; so, when do you intend to give us a new cousin ? Is it to be the young lady who confused your letter ?"

"I am afraid she will not have me," replied Herbert, with a show of humility which made his hearers laugh.

"Here comes Katharine, and of course Clara is not far off. I do not know how it is, but I who am so often accused of formality have long ceased to say Miss Darrell."

"Yes ; if I were not a wife of a thousand, Mr. Colvin, I should be jealous."

Her husband laughed, whilst Herbert advanced to Katharine, who came in from the lawn at the moment, her cheeks glowing with health and exercise, and her eyes dancing with pleasure at the meeting.

"My cousin says you wish to see me, Miss Darrell."

"Yes ; to tell you how very, very happy I am ; and to thank you for bringing me to Farnley Lodge. And now you are here I can find no words to tell my happi-

ness or gratitude," she answered, giving him her hand with unembarrassed frankness.

"I want no words," he replied, gazing on her admiringly, with a look that deepened the colour on her cheek, and made her turn away.

He led her to his cousin.

"Now, Mary, did I say too much? Did I exaggerate, when I told you of what Miss Darrell had been —what I hoped she would be again? I staked my character for veracity on my description—did I say more than the truth?"

"No, what you said was mere commonplace matter-of-fact. Katharine certainly is an embodied sunbeam —the incarnation of happiness, to be as poetical as yourself; and I most humbly beg your pardon for my doubts," replied his laughing cousin, glancing from the blushing Katharine to her husband, whose thoughts did not differ from his wife's more than does prose from poetry.

"After such a frank admission of error, Mrs. Colvin, I shall graciously forgive you. Will you too, Miss Darrell, own that you were wrong, and I was right, when I ventured on a prediction of brighter days, and something like a return of former looks and feelings.

"Yes, I was wrong and you were right. I was very naughty then—very fretful and despairing;—now I am happy, and, I hope, humbly grateful. But you all try to spoil me," replied Katharine, seating herself on a low cushion by Mrs. Colvin, and affectionately pressing the hand held out to her.

"Strong symptoms of spoiling, indeed; I see I must take you under my especial care and direction as I did Clara," observed Herbert in a manner that made Katharine look up, and then look down, as she observed: —You pardoned Mrs. Colvin—was I less frank?"

"You are not afraid of me, Miss Darrell!"

"Will you be merciful?"

"Very merciful! only insisting that you should listen to my lectures, I must keep up my practice, and, since I cannot lecture juries, must lecture you."

"Ah, me! How shall I escape?"

"There is no escape: I am inexorable."

"Then I must submit; but remember you have only insisted on my listening, not on my obeying."

"Rebellion! and that under the guise of submission! Look you to it, for I will be a very tyrant!"

"You shan't scold Katharine; and you shan't send her away," said Clara, who had entered unperceived. "I won't love you—and I won't be your wife, if you do."

"Heyday, more rebellion!" exclaimed Herbert, joining in the general laugh at the child's lofty air, drawing her towards him as he spoke.

"The revolt of the harem," observed his cousin gaily.

Herbert glanced at Mrs. Colvin and Katharine, then seating himself on a stool beside the latter, he placed the child on his knee, asking what she meant by being such an undutiful wife as to thwart her husband.

"Why did you want to take Katharine away, then?"

"You mistake, Clara; I did not want—"

"Oh, fie! cousin Herbert;—don't tell stories! See how red he looks, mamma!"

"Guilty!" cried Mr. and Mrs. Colvin in a breath, laughing at the child's penetration and Herbert's embarrassment.

"I repeat that it was all a mistake, Clara, I had not the slightest wish that Miss Darrell should go to old Lady Dumblany; and am delighted that she has resolved on staying here."

"I believe you now, cousin; but why did you look so red before?"

"Would not any one of my height be red, stooping to such a little wee, wee thing as you?"

"So that is all, dear cousin Herbert!" cried the happy child, kissing him again and again. "I am sorry now that I scolded you."

"Indeed! And you will still condescend to be my wife, then?"

"Yes; and dear Katharine shall be your wife, too,"

cried Clara, suddenly passing her arm round Kate's neck, so as to draw her close to Herbert. "You will be his wife—won't you ?"

"No !" replied Katharine quickly, releasing herself from the child's hold, and turning away.

"Katharine will have nothing to say to him ; she leaves him all to you, Clary," observed her father, laughing at the abrupt and decisive monosyllable.

"Yes ; Miss Darrell's 'no' was sufficiently determined," remarked Herbert, as it seemed in pique.

"No wonder ! Pretty proceedings ! not contented with one wife, Herbert, in a Christian land ?" said Mrs. Colvin.

"Remember, it was Clara's proposition, and not mine ; I should not have so presumed," replied her cousin rather pointedly ; then, changing to sudden gaiety, he carried off Clara for a romp upon the lawn.

"What a long ramble ! a whole three hours !" remarked Mrs. Colvin the next day, as Miss Darrell, Herbert, and Clara, came in from the garden. "Has he been inflicting one of the promised lectures upon you, Katharine ?"

"That I have; and I am happy to say I ground great hopes on her patient listening, cousin."

"I am glad to hear it, and suppose her modesty causes her blushes, and prevents her answering for herself. By the by, dear Katharine, I expect an invalid friend, and must coax you to make fitting arrangements for her comfort. I know no one so delightful to come about one in illness as yourself; you think of every thing—even to fresh flowers, a light tread, and a gentle smile. I do not feel equal to much; and there are hosts of other people coming at the same time, which I am afraid may annoy her; but Lady Yerbury insists on my making no change in my plans, as she cannot remain more than two or three days. I fear that this may be our last meeting upon earth. Poor Caroline! Her's has been a life of suffering, though she makes no complaint. So beautiful —so gentle—and doomed to be so wedded!"

"I have often wondered how she came to marry such a wretch," observed Herbert Eustace.

"I suspect she had no choice, being too gentle to contend with her stern mother, or her spendthrift father, who were dazzled with Lord Yerbury's wealth. Not that Caroline complains of her parents; but she was certainly more like a corpse than a bride at her wedding, and has never looked happy since. My only surprise is, that she has lived so long subject to the unkindness of her lord, who has already fixed upon her successor. Any other woman would have been parted from him years ago; and nothing but her remarkable gentleness and patience could have enabled her to endure his harsh and insulting conduct;—that very patience has prolonged her life. Poor Caroline! when I think on all her sufferings I am well nigh in a rage."

"What made Lord Yerbury so eager for the match?"

"Her beauty; and as that faded, so faded every semblance of respect—of love, he was not capable."

"She receives little consolation from her mother, I believe."

"None; Lady Mexington is vexed that she will not have two grandsons earls; yet her son's son gives her little pleasure."

"I hope she will not accompany her daughter; that woman is my aversion. In cold, selfish, calculating ambition, she is unequalled; and for pride and haughtiness, when not controlled by interest, I will match her against any. Mrs. Morven is proud, but her's is a noble pride, (if I may be allowed to say any thing so wicked,) compared with Lady Mexington's. Mrs. Morven could perform a generous act, in spite of her pride, perhaps from it, though against her own interest, if it did not interfere with her idol, family honour; but she could not commit a mean one, though none should know it but herself. Lady Mexington, on the contrary, could not perform a generous act, but would a base one, if certain of maintaining secresy; though relatives, there has ever been great rivalry between them. Lady Mexington triumphed over Mrs. Morven during her adversity; and never, I suspect, did two ladies of the same race detest

each other more sincerely, though always civil in their speech. In my wicked, mischievous days, it used to be one of my favourite pastimes to provoke them to a quarrel; and then laugh at both. I believe Mrs. Morven has forgiven me, considering my loss of wealth and title as sufficient punishment for all my misdemeanours, but Lady Mexington vowed revenge; and wo to me if I fell into her power, I absolutely shrank from her wrath."

"Poor Herbert! I never suspected you of fearing woman, but, in pity to your terrors, I can assure you that Lady Mexington does not come hither, at least, I have not heard of such being her intention."

Lady Yerbury arrived, and though expecting to see her changed, Mrs. Colvin started back in grief and surprise at the painful alteration.

As schoolfellows they had been much attached, and much together; and though circumstances had parted them in after life, and checked the frankness of Lady Yerbury's nature, each retained much of the affection of their early years.

Lady Yerbury saw her friend's start, and pressing her hand with a sad smile accounted for her looking worse than usual, by the admission of fatigue. "Do not grieve for me, dear Mary; I am more happy now than I have been since we were little children; perhaps still happier than then. I had wild spirits, and a restless mind, loving, longing for a thousand things—now I have learnt to love my God the first; and have no longing for the things of earth. Yet I wished to see you once again, you and your dear child. I have ever loved you, though we have not met;—I dared not meet you—I feared to pour into your feeling heart the story of my wo—I dared not speak to you of what I scarcely dared to think upon myself. Why pain you with a grief you could not soothe? And why speak ill of those to whom my duty bound me? You have a girl, dear Mary, and they tell me lovely; sell not her hand for rank or gold—barter not her beauty as you would not have her death upon your soul—as you would not

doom her to a life of fearful trial. But you are kind and gentle—you will not compel your child to misery."

"Heaven forbid! Poor Caroline! and you have borne all this! I guessed it, though you would not speak."

"You cannot guess a thousandth part of what hath been—I would not that you should. No; let it pass—let the memory of my sorrows die with me—those sorrows have been good for me. I part in peace and charity with all—I have no wish to live, and would not change my lot for all this world can offer. There is rest in the grave—and hope beyond."

Mrs. Colvin was much moved. Her tears fell fast as she looked on this friend of her youth sinking into the grave with a peace, a hope, almost angelic; and then thought of her as she had once been, a gay and happy schoolgirl; and then the lovely woman, flattered and admired by all who knew her.

The friends wept, hand held in hand; and the gentle admonitions of the dying one, whose heart was weaned from earth by suffering and by prayer, were not unprofitable to the living.

"I am ashamed of my weakness and egotism, dear Mary; it is long since I have talked so much of myself; and now I must talk of you. Tell me—are you as happy as they say you are?"

"I should be most ungrateful if I were not happy with such a husband! and such a child! and so many kind friends! and the means of doing good to others; but I am ashamed to say I fret sometimes at my poor health, fearing lest I should weary out dear Charles, kind and considerate as he has ever been; and I am afraid I dote too much on Clara. I will take you for my model, striving to do better for the future."

"Take a higher model, Mary! One not of earth!—and oh, not me! Had I not sinned, I had not suffered as I have. But I will talk no more of my poor self. Have you not an addition to your family, one with the attractions of the girl and woman all combined? I heard her praised the other day as young men seldom praise

the penniless, all regretting that she had a mad mother, a wicked father, and no fortune. Happy for her perhaps that she has no wealth to tempt them. What am I to call her?—a companion?"

"I really cannot tell you Katharine's real situation in our household; she calls herself the family pet, and declares that we all spoil her. She is the most grateful and affectionate of human beings—assists and smiles upon everybody—manages the house—helps to entertain my company—teaches and plays with Clara—nurses me—and talks sound sense with Charles, or amuses him with her gay sallies. She came to stay one month—she has been here many—and we have all decided that it would be impossible to live without her. I suppose, as she says, we must invent a new office, and call her 'the pet,' and here she is to answer for herself. Come, Katharine, and let me introduce my old friend and new favourite to each other."

Lady Yerbury half rose from the sofa on which she was reclining—looked at Katharine, and uttering a deep sigh, sank back insensible.

"Poor Caroline! the journey has been too much for her weak frame," observed Mrs. Colvin, hastening to render every assistance.

Lady Yerbury was too ill to join the party in the drawing room for several days; but Katharine, at her particular request, spent as much of her time with her as she could spare from Mrs. Colvin's other guests, fulfiling the character which that lady had given her, by proving herself the most tender and attentive of nurses; the most affectionate and grateful of human beings; ready to love all who only smiled upon her; thankful for every kindness; and no longer painfully sensitive to slights, or inuendoes, which in fact she now rarely encountered; the guests of Farnley Lodge, as usual, modeling their manner on that of their host and hostess.

It was evening—the hour of peace and gentle beauty; —that time which more than any other in the day can gladden or depress, Lady Yerbury was lying on the

sofa in her own quiet dressing room, the beams of the setting sun coming in at the open window, and shedding a gentle glow on the pallid cheek of the patient sufferer, lending it a more than earthly beauty. Katharine gazed upon her for some moments with mingled pity, love, and admiration; then, checking her tears, that had risen at the thought of how soon that weary heart would be at rest, she took her seat on a low chair beside the invalid, asking if she should finish the book which she had been reading to her in the morning.

"No, I thank you, dear child, if you will let me call you so. I would rather hear you talk; there is something in your tone when speaking which touches and yet soothes me, bringing back thoughts of other days—of one long since departed. And your looks, too, are like his, I felt they were when we first met, and loved you for the likeness."

She paused, overcome by the recollections of the past, and Katharine, not knowing how to soothe her, pressed her hand in silence.

Merry voices and light laughter came in at the open window from the lawn below.

Katharine rose—looked out on the speakers, and kissed her hand—her glowing cheek becoming still more glowing as she did so.

Lady Yerbury marked the movement, the heightened colour, and the instant turning away from the window; and a sigh and a smile struggled for mastery.

"Go, dear girl! go and join those of more suitable minds and ages. I have already kept you too much in a sick chamber, waiting on the fancies of a capricious invalid."

"Not capricious, dear Lady Yerbury; ever kind, gentle, and patient; and I am so happy when with you! —indeed, I am always happy now—every one is so kind; and dear Mrs. Colvin and her husband, and little Clara, are so fond of me; but it is a different feeling which I have for you—a different happiness when I am with you;—it is more like what I used to feel for Mrs. Arnold, my dear, my more than mother. When you

thank me so sweetly, calling me your child, I almost think she is before me. I will not leave you now, unless you say that you are tired of me."

"I am not tired of you," replied Lady Yerbury, passing her long, thin fingers through her bright curls, parting them from off her open brow, and looking on her for some moments without speaking, whilst a sadder expression came over her placid features; then starting from her reverie, she said:—

"You may stay with me in body, but your heart will be with that gay company. Nay, I did not mean to chide—it is but natural at your age," she added, seeing that Kate bent her head to hide a blush. "There is one in that merry group, dear—very dear to you."

"Yes, dear little Clara is there," replied Katharine hurriedly, looking away.

"And no one else who is dear, dearer still? Ah, Katharine! a very child could read your secret—you must wear a mask or the truth will out.

Katharine was silent.

"You do not—you cannot deny it. Will you take advice from one, who loves you better than our short acquaintanceship might seem to warrant? Do not trifle with a heart that truly loves you—let no flattery tempt you to coquetry. You cannot tell the misery of loving, thinking yourself unloved."

"I would trifle with no heart, Lady Yerbury. I have never played the coquette; yet have known what it is to love and be unloved; — far worse — rejected— scorned!"

Lady Yerbury was startled with the passionate earnestness of Katharine's reply.

"Forgive me! I would not willingly have touched upon a painful theme. I have heard too much, or too little; but I will not believe you a coquette."

"Thank you, dear Lady Yerbury, I was too indignant at the accusation; but, despising coquetry as I do, I trust I shall never practise it."

"I trust so, too, of evil purpose;—but may you not be playing the coquette unconsciously?"

"I am not conscious of being unconsciously a coquette," said Katharine laughing.

"You shall not escape through my blundering questions. Will you assert that you kissed your hand to Clara?"

Katharine's quick glance was withdrawn on the instant, and she busied herself in arranging her sandal, as she replied.

"Ask Clara; she will tell you that it was."

"I ask Katharine Darrell—not Clara Colvin."

"Katharine Darrell kisses her hand to a thousand people."

"Katharine Darrell does not kiss her hand to a thousand people, as she did to that one;—nor would her fingers be so awkward in arranging her sandals, if her mind dwelt not on other things. Is she not now consciously, or unconsciously, playing the coquette?—feeling preference, yet pretending indifference?—sowing the seeds of sorrow for herself and others? You have no cause to blush for your attachment;—why deny and endeavour to conceal it? Why not admit how highly you regard him?"

"He has never asked the question," answered Katharine in confusion.

"Indeed! Then I misapprehended Mrs. Colvin. I understood that he had not only told his love to her, but you!"

"Did he say this to her?" asked Katharine quickly.

Lady Yerbury smiled.

"Yes; he has engaged her upon his side. She wanted me to join in urging you to pity; but I may spare my eloquence, I think.—May I not? Shall I tell Mary that he may hope."

"Why does he not plead to me himself?" asked Katharine rather proudly, striving to master her confusion.

"Is this worthy of you, Katharine? Will you for a poor punctilio throw your happiness away? If Mr. Burnet has not said exactly 'Katharine will you have me,' still he has said too much to leave a doubt of his

intentions. Do not play the trifler. Bid me tell him that he may hope," she said, laying her hand caressingly on her young favourite's shoulder.

Instead of replying, Katharine rose abruptly, and walked to the window from which she had before looked out.

"You think I have no right to urge you on this point," continued her ladyship, after a time, breaking the awkward silence, "I have no excuse but my regard."

Katharine started at her voice, endeavouring to repress some painful feeling; and then approached the sofa, standing before Lady Yerbury with a changing cheek, and speaking in a passionate tone, which was rare with her:

"I love not Mr. Burnet—and I will not wed him! If Mrs. Colvin is weary of my presence, I will go—I only stayed at her entreaty; but if you will think me a coquette, I cannot help it."

Her hearer was amazed.

"Come hither, my proud Katharine; I must lay that evil spirit. Mary has no wish to part with you; and I do not think you a coquette; only a dear, warm-hearted, wayward child."

"Forgive me, dear Lady Yerbury!" said Katharine, moved to tears by her gentle words, "I am not wayward; but I love not Mr. Burnet; and he knows it. He is ungenerous to urge me thus through friends, knowing, that should they desert me, I have not bread to eat; yet I would rather have it so than wed with one I cannot love. It is not as if I had always been indifferent; I have loved—I was beloved;—and though rejected, scorned, I will be Katharine Darrell till my death, if I feel not as much or more than I felt then. It is hard to thwart the wishes of my friends; but is it kind in them to press what pains me? Do not you, too, join against me? Do not condemn me to a living death—a union of the hands and not the hearts?"

"I urge you to the giving of the hand without the heart? the selling of your beauty for fine gold?—Never!

If they ask it, do not do it !—if they smile upon you, turn away ?—if they flatter, do not listen !—if they threaten, do not yield ! Go down into the grave, if heaven raise you up no friends ; but go not to the altar with a falsehood on your lips ?"

It was Katharine's turn to be surprised at such a burst of feeling from the usually placid Lady Yerbury, whose strength failed as she concluded. The hectic flush and the unnatural brightness of the eye faded on the instant, and the speaker sank back on the sofa from which she had half risen pale and exhausted.

Katharine gave her some restoring drops, and the invalid revived.

"I have surprised you by my vehemence—I have surprised myself. I thought I could be calm even on this subject. Alas ! we never know ourselves. Deal frankly with me, and I may serve you. Was it not Mr. Burnet to whom you kissed your hand ?"

"No ?" answered Katharine promptly, though shunning her friend's look.

"May I then ask to whom ?"

Katharine was silent, and Lady Yerbury continued without pressing the question.

"There is some riddle to be read. Mary told me that Mr. Burnet's attentions had been marked from your first acquaintance; that you knew his feelings, and she was convinced were not indifferent to him, though for some unknown reason you declined his suit. She spoke of him as young, rich, with none to control him ; sensible, generous, and much attached ; and, warm in his cause, not only urged me to persuade you, but asked the same of Mr. Eustace."

"Did Mr. Eustace engage to do so ?" demanded Katharine quickly.

"No, he refused abruptly, saying that he had neither right nor inclination to influence your decision, and persisted in non-interference, though his cousin grew rather warm at what she termed your obstinacy, continuing to point out the advantages of the match in which he readily concurred."

"And what were the advantages in which he so readily concurred ?"

"Wealth, a sensible husband, and a happy home."

"And can none but Mr. Burnet ever offer these ?" she demanded, stopping abruptly, and looking down.

Lady Yerbury hesitated a moment, and then said gently : "Wealth, sense, and generosity, are not everyday combinations ; and a happy home must be much to any one—to you—"

"I understand," interrupted Katharine, as she paused to word her meaning delicately. "I undersand you"—the blood rushing up to her temples as she spoke, and then retreating, leaving not a tint of colour in her lip or cheek. "You mean that no one else with wealth and sense would wed a beggar, with a poor, crazy mother, and I fear, a sinful father. And Mr. Eustace readily concurred in this ;—he was right ;—and you, and Mrs. Colvin, are both right. I have thought too little of these things of late, I have been happy—too happy ;—but I now see what I am. As I said before, I will not weary Mrs. Colvin with my presence. I am well now, quite well. I will work with my hands as befits my birth, till death shall come ; and then Katharine Darrell will go down into the grave with none to weep for her ;—she will cause none to mourn—she will let none do a foolish act for her."

"Can this be the Katharine Darrell of the last few days ?—my gentle nurse ? the petted favourite of all, standing before me now with that blanched cheek and haughty mien ? the blue veins swelling on her brow—the curl of scorn upon her lip ?"

"No, Lady Yerbury ; I am not the Katharine Darrell of the last few days ; I am no more the petted, happy favourite of all ;—the gloom of the past is on me ;—I am again an outcast—and alone. I would slave, I would perform the drudgery of a menial for Mrs. Colvin, for I love her, and am grateful—but wed with Mr. Burnet I cannot—and I will not. Tell her so, if you please—tell Mr. Eustace so ; and that I wait in my room to know their wishes."

"Stay, Katharine! you shall not leave me in anger."

"I am not angry; or, if so, it is with myself. I must ever love Mrs. Colvin for the past, though she should discard me now."

"She has no wish to discard you. Come back, I entreat; you know I am too feeble to detain or follow you."

Katharine came back, but slowly and reluctantly.

"What more would you have with me?"

"I would have you dismiss that lofty air, which so ill becomes you."

"That lofty air which ill becomes me! It does, indeed! What have I to do with pride? a beggar and an outcast."

She seated herself as desired, bending her face on her clasped hands, whilst her deep sobs told her sorrow.

"Dear child, look up, I cannot bear to see you thus. I wished to serve, and I have only pained you. I would calm you, and I cannot calm myself.—You have brought the past before me, till the feeble frame shudders at its memory."

Katharine looked up—their eyes met; and the next moment the agitated girl was weeping in Lady Yerbury's arms.

"Hush those sobs, if but for my sake. I will not let you go till you promise to love Mary as before, and to believe me when I say that nothing would grieve her, her husband, and her child, so much as your departure."

"Why then urge my union with Mr. Burnet?"

"Solely for your fancied benefit; consoling herself for your loss by your being settled so near that you might meet almost every day. Believe me, I only speak the simple truth; and she would be much vexed if she knew how you had misinterpreted her words."

"But Mr. Eustace—why should he desire?"

"I am not sure that he does desire it," replied Lady Yerbury in answer to her broken question. "He admitted the prudence of the match, but positively refused to interfere, appearing to think it possible that you might

not like Mr. Burnet, though you had been much with him of late."

"He should have said that Mr. Burnet had been much with me," remarked Katharine quickly.

"I am sure he thought so, if he did not say it. And now, Katharine, you must forget my meddling, and be as happy as you were before."

"Can we forget just when and what we would?"

"No! no!" exclaimed Lady Yerbury, with unusual vehemence; "years, long years of suffering have elapsed, and yet the past is now before me more clearly than the present. I see him, who has gone down into the grave —I see the husband of my love—a corpse—I meet a mother's wrath. I stand before the altar—a widow in a bridal robe, vowing to the living that love which rested with the dead."

"Then you will not urge me to this marriage—you will not let others do it," exclaimed Katharine, clinging closer to her; though startled at an excitement which she had never seen before.

"Hear me! and then ask the question—hear what no other ear has heard—no other ear must hear. I know not why the hoarded secret of so many years should be revealed to you; but so it is. Strange thoughts have stirred within me from the first moment of our meeting —I could not look upon you as a stranger. You seemed to me as a lost child—the living image of the dead, sent to soothe and bless my parting hours, to hear my woes, and weep them with me. You have recalled the past, and you must hear its history."

She paused some moments, and then continued with passionate eloquence, the resistless force of a strong impulse. Katharine could but listen in silence to the rushing torrent of her speech, wondering how that feeble frame could have so suddenly found strength.

"Once I was young, and gay, and beautiful, they said; and I may say so now;—for what was beauty but a fatal gift?—Let the vain look upon my faded form, and profit by the lesson. Lady Caroline Eltringham was flattered, fêted, followed, but she loved none that flattered, or that

followed, though she was early told that she must bargain for a title—be bartered for fine gold. If she loved not those who followed, she loved one who followed not—her brother's tutor—and he had neither title nor fine gold, though of good birth;—had worth, and talent —and no more. Yes, he had honour; and he shunned his pupil's sister. And then I shunned him, too, thinking myself despised; and forcing smiles whilst my heart wept. All believed us careless of each other, and in time we might have become so, but a slight accident revealed our feelings;—in the excitement of danger the secret was confessed;—he had shunned me to conceal his own affection; not knowing—not despising mine.

"The hurry, the agitation of our mutual confession had not subsided, when my mother bade me wed Lord Yerbury. I wept—I implored; but all in vain—she was peremptory;—my father was the like—my brother turned away. Lord Yerbury was an earl, and rich. Love!—who thought of love but silly and romantic schoolgirls? My lot would be the envy of the multitude.

"I sought Frederick in despair. How could he behold my sufferings unmoved? How feel for, and not endeavour to alleviate them? He knew what Lord Yerbury was in mind and morals; and that remonstrance or entreaty would be useless. There was but one way to save me from this wretched fate.

"A visit to an aged relative favoured our wishes—we were married—secretly married by a young friend of his, no one being present but my nurse, who could not resist my pleading. The deed was rash—was sinful—I seek not to excuse it:—it was my doing—it was the sight of my misery that overcame him. Dearly! how dearly! has it been expiated.

"No one suspected our marriage—no one even guessed our attachment;—we were one, we could not be parted—but we were not happy. The consciousness of wrong and deceit embittered our joy, and the dread of detection before we had arranged for the disclosure, and the fear of the consequences of that disclosure made us tremble.

"The death of Lord Yerbury's mother, postponed the preparations for my union with his lordship; and Frederick was called to the north by the dangerous illness of his father, from whom a second marriage had somewhat estranged him, and compelled him to undertake the office of tutor.

"'Keep up your spirits, dear Caroline, for my sake,' were his parting words, 'I will soon return, and place you in safety: though poor, I am of no mean family; and hope to be reconciled to my father, and induce him to receive you, as you deserve to be received. I trust there are many years of happiness in store for us both.'

"From that day I never knew a happy hour.

"My mother returned from a long visit which she had been paying my married sister:—she spoke of my union with Lord Yerbury at the expiration of his mourning:—I made no reply, but I thought she eyed me keenly and suspiciously.

"My own attendant, the witness of my marriage, who had been much attached to me, had unhappily died a short time before; and I was on the point of writing to my husband, who had been long detained by his father's illness, to tell him that the disclosure must soon be made; when I received a letter fixing an early day for his return, the state of imbecility into which his father had lately fallen rendering his further attendance useless.

"The day passed—but he came not—my mother's keen eye was never off me; and a horrible dread came over me. I feared her presence, and yet I feared to be alone. That night I never closed my eyes—in the morning my husband was brought home—a corpse! He had been found at the foot of a precipice close to a dangerous part of the road, and must have been dead some hours.

"Hearing the murmur of many voices, and the trampling of many feet, I rushed out and met his body as they were bringing it into the hall. Springing wildly forward I threw myself on the corpse with a fearful scream of agony.

"When restored to consciousness, I was in my own

room, the tortures of the mind and body contending for the mastery—my haughty mother sitting beside my bed, gazing on me with a stern, unpitying look, and giving orders to her own attendant, a harsh, old woman, who had never loved me.

"I started up—I asked if Frederick lived? my mother answered sternly "no!" I asked no more.

"In the silence and the darkness of that dreadful night I became a mother—but, alas! a childless mother! —They said my infant never even breathed.

"For days I was delirous—none saw me but my mother and her maid. I cannot tell how I lived through that, and many following weeks, meeting nothing but stern looks, and harsh and bitter words. I prayed for death, but it would not come; and now I bless my God for further trials, making me fitter by his loving chastening for his holy presence. Strange to say, my health grew better week by week, though I asked not to live, and took no care of life, only submitting to my mother's orders, though shuddering at her presence.

"I had not left my room, when I was told to prepare for becoming Lord Yerbury's bride on that day month.

"I pleaded—remonstrated;—spoke of my marriage with the dead.

"My mother scoffed;—she professed to disbelieve my marriage, making my father of the same opinion.

"She did not, or would not appear to credit my assertions; and I had no proofs to adduce. My attendant was dead—the young man who had performed the ceremony gone as a missionary, I knew not whither—the certificate had always been in my husband's possession; and my mother declared had not been found among his papers.

"I knew not how to prove my marriage, and had I known—of what avail? I had no child to whom an honourable birth would be a blessing, and believed myself to be fast sinking into the grave.

"I could never love again—my heart revolted at a second marriage—and with such a person—and so soon; but father, mother, brother, all came with their harsh

looks, and bitter words, threatening to reveal my shame, and leave me to the mocking of the world. They were blind to my tears—deaf to my pleading—all my entreaties but increased their anger. I was bowed beneath the outbursting of their wrath; and the widow of five months became again a bride; plighting her faith with a despairing heart to one whom she dreaded and despised. More than twenty years have I now been a wife. How would it shock the young, who look on happiness as theirs of right, could they but know that not one day in all that time would they write down a happy one—and yet there have been days and months more blessed than youth's tumultuous joy. My pining heart has found a good whereon to rest, and I would not take one hour of suffering from the many I have endured, relying on God's mercy that He chastened but in love ;—one hour —one moment less would have been an evil and not good.

"But you who have not brought this suffering on yourself by disobedience and deceit, give not your hand without your heart. You have no parents to command; —yield not to worldly policy—yield not to persuasion; —labour—slave—do anything but link yourself with one you cannot love—vow not a faith you cannot keep —bring not upon yourself the daily misery of striving to fulfil a painful duty, forcing yourself to try to love. The heart will not be forced ; it may be wooed—it cannot be compelled. Wed not if you do not love ; and still less if you love another, though you may never meet the one you love again ;—though he should rest among the dead. If friends—if poverty should tempt you, think of Lady Yerbury, and promise me you will not yield."

"I will not yield ! I promise this !"

"If you please, my lady, Lady Mexington is come, hearing that you had been ill, and wishes to know if you can see her directly," said Lady Yerbury's maid, entering at the moment.

Lady Yerbury sank back with a shudder, whilst a deadly paleness suceeeded the glow of excitement. She had just revealed her mother's selfish cruelty—had told

how she had condemned her to years of misery ;—it seemed as though that mother had come to reproach her.

"Shall I tell Lady Mexington that your ladyship will see her presently ?" asked the maid, who, having lived many years with her mistress, had seen too much of the haughty countess not to guess that her presence could be dispensed with.

"Yes do, Hill ; say I am faint now, but will see her presently," replied the invalid with her usual languid gentleness, a striking contrast to her late passionate earnestness.

"Go now, dear Katharine," she said, kissing her cheek after some moments' silence, "I know I may rely on your discretion ; and you will heed my warning. I know not that I should have told my tale ; but you are so like him I loved and lost that I could not look upon you as a stranger ; and telling you seemed telling him the story of my sufferings ; I have scarcely been so moved since I first knelt beside his grave, and where they laid my little one. Had she but lived, and been like you ; I had forgotten half my wo. Yet I would murmur not—God's will be done ! Now leave me ; I would be alone a little while to calm my ruffled spirit before I see my mother."

"I wish you would go and try to entertain Lady Mexington," said Mrs. Colvin, meeting Katharine on the stairs. "She is in an awful mood ; vexed that Caroline cannot see her immediately. I have been playing civil to no purpose ; the only thing in which she finds amusement is in annoying Herbert. Will Caroline receive her now ?"

"Not till her bell rings. I left her faint, and she requires some minutes to recover."

"Then do pray go down to the countess, and try to charm her into good humour. Charles will introduce you ; and I suspect run away the succeeding minute."

Mr. Colvin acted as his wife had predicted, but Katharine's endeavours to charm the countess were of no avail ; nor was Katharine surprised at this, aware that her own manner was influenced by the history which

she had heard. She could scarcely suppress a shudder as she entered her presence, and her ladyship's sudden start and piercing look, proving that she, too, had remarked the likeness to her son's tutor, was not calculated to reassure her. Her own manner was in consequence constrained ; and her dread and dislike apparent under the veil of politeness.

This did not escape the keen observation of the countess ; and the haughtiness with which she answered Katharine's endeavours to entertain her, after the delivery of Lady Yerbury's message, proved her little grateful for her attempts, and less inclined to encourage them.

"What did you say was that young woman's name?" she inquired of Mrs. Colvin, as that lady showed her the way to her daughter's room.

"Katharine Darrell."

"What, the impostor, whom Lord Ermiston would have married, had not her crazy mother claimed her so inopportunely ?"

"Miss Darrell is no impostor, Lady Mexington ; she has mind and manners fitting her for any station. Her mother was supposed to have been long dead, and Katharine herself released Lord Ermiston from his engagement."

"You have a warm heart, Mrs. Colvin, and suspect no one of deceit, past or present. I hope the girl may not prove ungrateful for your excessive kindness, but even the best and most humble of the lower orders can never bear a translation to higher honours."

Before Mrs. Colvin could rally in defence of her young favourite, the speaker, with a sneer upon her lip, had passed into her daughter's room. Their interview was brief, for Lady Mexington could not but see that the only chance of her daughter's being able to travel on the morrow, as she wished, would be the avoidance of anything that could not agitate her. Lady Mexington soon sought her own apartment, pleading fatigue ; and those whom she left in the drawing room talked more freely when she had quitted it.

CHAPTER VI.

Some by their words their thoughts reveal;
And some use speech, but to conceal.

An adieu should in utterance die,
Or, if written, but faintly appear;
Only heard through the breath of a sigh,
Only read through the blot of a tear.

WHAT a contrast was the Lady Yerbury of the morning to the Lady Yerbury of the previous night! She was calm, patient, gentle, as those who knew her said she had been for years; no trace of the passionate energy, the strong emotion of the preceding evening—no allusion to her tale of wo, save when taking leave of Katharine, for whom she sent to her own apartment, excusing herself from joining the party in the breakfast room.

"We have met for the last time; but I would have you think of me sometimes, not in sorrow, scarce in pity; but in love. Take this, dear child, and wear it for my sake," said the countess, throwing over her neck the chain of an elegant watch. "No thanks! I owe you more, far more for your kind nursing. Do not forget my warning, let who will seek to rule; and if you hesitate—then think of Lady Yerbury. Heaven bless you!"

She embraced the weeping Katharine, drew down her veil, and taking Mrs. Colvin's arm, who came in at the moment, descended the stairs, and entered the carriage,

which was waiting, accompanied by her maid. Lady Mexington made her adieux a few moments after, and though she had exerted herself to be condescending and agreeable during breakfast, the general feeling was pleasure at her departure.

"Do you intend to appropriate Lady Mexington and her jointure, Eustace, that you handed her to her carriage?" asked a young man of the party. "I was amazed at seeing you doing the polite and pretty, after her endeavours last night to annoy you."

"That was the very reason. It was a little piece of playful spite, a relapse into the mischievous mood of my younger and more prosperous days. I know she detests me; and would as soon walk arm in arm with a bear, though of course she could not decline my politeness; and I made a point of lauding her motherly love, and attention to Lady Yerbury, when all the world knows that she sacrificed her daughter to her own ambition and the gambling debts of her lord; and has rarely gone near her till lately, now showing a feverish anxiety lest she should hold communion with her real friends, and perhaps tell more than her haughty ladyship would like revealed, though none know what that more is. She tried to receive my praises with a good grace, but I have the gratifying certainty that she will not recover her equanimity for some time to come."

"Take care, Herbert, how you provoke her hatred," said Mrs. Colvin.

"I am not afraid; and my not deserving her hatred would by no means save me from it; witness her conduct to Miss Darrell. I will answer for it that a hatred grew up in Lady Mexington's heart on their first meeting, as speedy and lofty as the thistles in the Pampas of South America. Had Miss Darrell been the ghost of a buried crime, her amiable ladyship could not have exhibited more surprise and hate. Beware, Miss Darrell, how you fall into her power;—remember, I have warned you."

"And to some purpose, too;—you have made Katharine as pale as the ghost of which you spoke."

Katharine endeavoured to laugh off the accusation, but she felt its correctness—the cruel treatment of Lady Yerbury came to her mind ; and most truly did she rejoice that she was neither kith nor kin of the dreaded countess.

"So I am really to assure poor Mr. Burnet that his hope is hopeless," said Mrs. Colvin to Katharine when no one else was present but Herbert Eustace.

"Yes, if you please."

"And I am not to blame, and never again to urge you to a prudent marriage, Caroline says ; and all for her sake. Must it be. thus ?"

"Yes it must, dear Mrs. Colvin."

Mrs. Colvin shook her head.

"You are a simple, silly girl. Had I a sister, Mr. Burnet should have her ; but you refuse to make a prudent match. I wish you would consider."

"Stop ! stop ! you are not to blame, not to urge me," interposed Katharine between smiles and tears, jest and earnest. "When you grow weary of me turn me out of the house ! for I am so very happy that I should not go willingly."

"You are a very saucy girl, presuming on the knowledge that we cannot do without you. I doubt if am sorry after all at your decision, though I thought it proper to talk prudence. Clara would be a dunce if you went, though such a little distance, and I should be worried to death as I used to be. You need not smile in triumph at this admission, Miss Darrell, it is very silly of you ; and I am ashamed at your supineness, Herbert ; you who profess to be her guardian should give her a lecture."

"With the greatest pleasure ; but I never lecture in the presence of a third person ;—so will you take your departure, cousin mine, or must I request the honour of Miss Darrell's company in another room ?"

"Your impertinence is great, Mr. Eustace ; however, to leave you no excuse for not doing your duty, I will take my departure."

"So will I," said Katharine, springing to the door.

"Not so, young lady," replied Herbert, detaining her, whilst he suffered Mrs. Colvin to depart.

"I will be very good—only spare me this once?" said Kate, holding up her hands in playful entreaty, but without meeting his eye.

"Are you so much alarmed? Have my former lectures been so very disagreeable?"

Her colour deepened; her hands no longer raised in playful entreaty, placed and unplaced the chain which had been thrown round her neck that morning. There was a something too earnest in his manner for mere jest.

The door was thrown open at the instant, and the name of a lady in the neighbourhood was announced, and in succession Mrs. and the Misses Banham.

Herbert and Katharine started. The former accustomed to *contre-tems*, recovered himself on the instant, but the latter exhibited unusual embarrassment, though finding it impossible to avoid a meeting, she came forward to receive Mrs. Colvin's guests. Mrs. Pennant, one of the least amiable of their neighbours, shook hands with Katharine, as a matter of course, (all the neighbours did so,) saying that she had brought Mrs. Banham and her daughters to call on Mrs. Colvin, whose acquaintance they had long wished to make.

Mrs. Banham shook hands with Katharine, and inquired after her health, rather to her surprise; and the young ladies did the same, but without any show of the affection of former days. Kate felt, as they intended, the difference between Mrs. Arnold's probable heiress and Mrs. Colvin's poor companion. As she had not expected even this scanty kindness, she felt no disappointment at the absence of greater warmth; her own increased knowledge of the world and Herbert's remarks having long since shown her the Banhams as they really were; but she was annoyed at the meeting;—it awoke melancholy recollections, and, perhaps, with a woman's caprice, she had a desire to hear that lecture against which she had a moment before protested. There

really is no accounting for the changes of a woman's mind! We give up the attempt in despair.

Mr. Eustace paid his *dévoirs* to all the ladies with equal ease and indifference, assisting Katharine to keep the whole party in conversation, till Mrs. Colvin appeared, when Mrs. Pennant engaged him to show the grounds to the young ladies, with a *malàdroit* eagerness which caused the quiet smile with which he had hitherto listened to Miss Charlotte's sallies to border on a laugh. After exchanging a glance with Katharine, whom Mrs. Pennant detained to show her a new stitch in carpet-work, he led the way across the lawn, the young ladies practising all their fascinations, whilst Mrs. Banham expressed her great delight in having at length effected an introduction to Mrs. Colvin and her charming little girl, whom she lauded to the skies.

"How very kind of you, Mrs. Colvin, to afford your protection to that poor girl," glancing at Katharine. "My heart bled for her when I found my old friend had left her quite unprovided for, after bringing her up with such extravagant notions. It is not every one who would receive her, poor thing, considering what her father and mother are; the one crazy, or pretending to be so; the other suspected of burglary, if nothing worse. To be sure, she may not have been told of his plans—we will hope she was not; and you have no son to be won by her charms. Your cousin, Mr. Eustace, knows her history; and is too prudent to be taken in."

"Yes, Herbert is not to be taken in by any one," replied Mrs. Colvin with a mischievous smile, adding more seriously—"we are all so fond of Miss Darrell, respecting her for her high principles, and loving her for her sweet temper, that we consider ourselves the persons obliged by her residence at Farnley Lodge."

"Indeed! I am glad to hear so good an account of her, for my old friend's sake, as well as her own; I was sadly afraid, brought up with such extravagant notions, that she might turn out idle and presuming."

"You need be under no alarm on that account, Mrs.

Banham ; the most malicious could not accuse her of indolence or presumption."

"I am delighted to hear it. I was afraid from some reports which have reached me that the poor girl might be thinking of making a match infinitely above her station," replied Mrs. Banham, raising her voice, unintentionally of course, so that her remark was not only heard by Katharine, who had not quite concluded her lesson in carpet-work, but also by Herbert, who was just entering the room with the ladies whom he had escorted. "Now this could only subject her to disappointment, as in the case of Lord Ermiston. However she may have been brought up, and however great her attractions, no man of prudence and high honour would seek her hand, if once acquainted with her parentage. The mother's malady alone, setting aside the father's character, must be an insuperable bar to such a union."

"Katharine has no idea—" began Mrs. Colvin, a little annoyed at these remarks.

"Hush !" interrupted Mrs. Banham with kind anxiety ; "she has finished teaching Mrs. Pennant, and may hear us."

Katharine had heard them, and rose to conceal her deepened colour. An exclamation from Miss Clara Banham caused her to turn towards her party—Herbert's eye was on her, and she saw, or fancied she saw, contempt and disgust in his look. The cheek paled as she turned away.

A servant entered with a letter for Mr. Eustace. He tore it open, more as it seemed from the hurry of previous excitement, than from real anxiety to learn its contents, which were by no means pleasing. It contained a summons from an old gentleman, a friend of his father's, supposed to be dying, to go and make his will, and arrange his affairs, according to a former promise.

Taking a hurried leave of Mrs. Banham and her daughters he left the room to prepare for his sudden journey ; and the visitors departed, saying a thousand flattering things to Mrs. Colvin, and the little Clara, and

congratulating Katharine on having found so kind a friend.

"It is very provoking your being called away just now, we see so little of you ;—but you will come back here, will you not?" asked his cousin on Herbert's returning to the drawing room equipped for travelling.

"I don't know."

"A brief and instructive answer that—you are annoyed, Herbert, I can see. Did the Misses Banham weary you? Or are you thinking?

'How happy could I be with either,
Were t'other dear charmer away.'

Suppose you toss up."

"Hang the Banhams!" exclaimed Herbert pettishly.

"For shame, Herbert! You amaze me! Hang three ladies! such kind, and generous—gentle creatures; and who are all so fond of you!"

"Fond of me!" he repeated scornfully. "The Indian's fondness for the Bishop of Quebec, 'Me like him so much, me eat him.'"

Mrs. Colvin laughed.

"Fie upon you, Herbert, when they came on purpose to see you, though their avowed reason was an introduction to me."

"I do not doubt it ;—they came to see how the land lay. My cousin the heir, besides having chosen a wife without consulting them, certainly no prudent choice, is in such a precarious state of health that I may die a baronet yet; to say nothing of my being what is called a rising young man. Then Mr. Burnet, one of the best matches in the country, is staying at Farnley Lodge; so they tried to enact the old proverb of killing two birds with one stone. I introduced them to Burnet, hoping in gratitude that they would cease to molest me; but there is no gratitude in woman."

"No gratitude in woman? Shame upon you, Herbert! What a cynic you are to-day. Here comes Charles; he shall join me in a defence of my sex."

"Two to one? then I'm off, exclaimed her cousin, crossing the room to Katharine, whilst Mr. Colvin related some news which he had just heard to his wife.

"I conclude it would be useless, Miss Darrell, to seek to know your thoughts. Were I to pour into your lap the riches of Geniston you would still be silent."

Katharine turned towards him for an instant in surprise at his bitter tone, and he saw that tears were in her eyes; yet she tried to answer him with playful gaiety.

"Pour them in and try," holding up her apron; "and let me prove that a woman can be silent, though tempted with the treasures of the Genii."

"Your silence would prove something more—it would establish the assertion, which so enraged my cousin, that there is no gratitude in woman."

"Surely, Mr. Eustace, you cannot think me ungrateful!"

She spoke from a sudden impulse, thus individualising the remark which it would have been less embarrassing to consider in a general view; and would have recalled her words when too late.

"I did not say so—did I? I would not willingly believe it."

"Then do not believe it. Task my gratitude if you will—it shall not fail."

"Do you speak the truth?" he asked with eagerness, his keen eye on her, as if he would look her through.

"I do," she answered rather proudly.

"Tell me your thoughts, then, for the last half hour."

She drew back in confusion;—she tried to speak, but the lip quivered, and she was silent.

"I have put you to the proof you dared, and you have failed. I should have known it would be so. Farewell, Miss Darrell!"

He spoke with a mingling of sad and bitter feelings; and would have left her on the instant, but her mournful answer changed his purpose.

"I am not ungrateful—do not think so."

"You were silent;" was his moody reply.

"Was it kind—was it generous to ask what my thoughts had been! What could they be but shame and sorrow? I may forget for some few moments what I am, but others will not. I cannot mix with those of my own lowly station, and must not mix with those above it. All should shun me; Mrs. Colvin ought to send me from her;—I shall bring my mother's malady into her family and rob, as my father is said to have done. I will go—go far away;—I will bring evil upon none. I may be indolent—presuming;—but I am not ungrateful."

"Can you forgive my cruelty?" asked Herbert earnestly, self-condemned by her appeal, and the tears which she could no longer repress. "It was neither kind nor generous—it was cruel and unmanly to urge you as I did. Can you forgive me? Can you forget my harshness? Will you not pardon me before I go?"

"It is not for me to retain anger against any one—against Mr. Eustace I cannot feel it;—he has my gratitude!"

The hand that he had taken trembled in his grasp as he pleaded for more than forgiveness.

"Forget what that selfish and manœuvring woman said for her own pleasure only. My cousin loves you—we all love you; we cannot, will not part with you—I no longer doubt your gratitude, but I ask for more. I would have you regret my absence—wish for my return. Do not say that I ask too much."

"Come, Eustace! you must hasten your *adieux;* I am waiting to drive you to the village. Be quick, or the coach will have passed," cried Mr. Colvin, who had a great objection, as most plain, matter-of-fact men have, to being kept waiting; and what might be called a practical horror of being too late. His wife always averred that, but for her delay, they would have been in church on the wedding-day before the canonical hour.

"Do you get in, Colvin, I shall be ready as soon as you have taken the reins," replied Herbert, resuming on the instant his discourse with Katharine.

"You are silent! Will you not regret me? I ask but one little word. Do not send me away without it, or I shall think I am not forgiven? Will you regret my absence?"

"Yes."

He did not quarrel with the low, faltering tone; but only presumed the more.

"Will you welcome my return with—"

"Come along, Eustace; I shall not let you go till you are safe in the coach," exclaimed Mr. Colvin, laying hold of his arm, and dragging him away.

"Stay one moment!"

"Not an instant—I must breathe the horses, as it is."

"You can finish your lecture to your ward when next you come; I dare say she will rejoice to be spared for the present," said his laughing cousin.

"I flatter myself that Miss Darrell is not rejoiced at the breaking off of our discourse, which I hope to resume ere long."

"Poor Katharine!" said Mrs. Colvin.

"No leave-taking, Eustace," cried her husband, dragging Herbert away; who, though provoked at his impatience, could not help smiling at its display.

"Farewell, ladies! Mourn my absence! rejoice in my return! this wretch Colvin, will not permit me a more sentimental parting."

"I should think not—that is nonsense enough for a whole room full."

"And you really have no idea when you come back?" asked his cousin as the door was closing after him.

"The first moment that I can command," was his reply, looking back as he spoke.

His words were addressed to Mrs. Colvin, but his eye sought Katharine.

Within the week came an account of Lady Yerbury's death, her closing hour as peaceful as had been her life for many months;—and in a few days followed a letter and some jewels as memorials of her regard for Mrs.

Colvin, directed to be delivered after her death; and a small packet for Katharine, containing a fifty pound note, a broach with her hair, and some lines full of affectionate gentle warning.

Her fate was wept by both, though Katharine alone knew how sad that fate had been; yet each felt that to regret her death was to regret her release from suffering.

Letters also arrived from Herbert Eustace accounting for his protracted absence, which, if they contained no enclosure for Katharine, conveyed messages, which seemed to imply that he had set his heart on not being forgotten. Yet weeks, months elapsed, and he did not return, notwithstanding his professed anxiety.

The old gentleman to whom his father had been under great obligations, could not bear that he should leave him; and as only one hundred pounds was left to himself, delicacy detained him longer than might a more splendid legacy. Then came professional engagements, which must be fulfilled; and after that the relapse of the friend whom he had before so sedulously attended, and whom he could not quit till pronounced out of danger.

CHAPTER VII.

"News, masters, News! great news, and grand news!"
SHAKSPEARE.

"COUSIN Herbert is come, and wants you in the library," cried Clara, bursting into Katharine's room, who started up at the intelligence, and then sat down again, blushing and confused. "You must come this moment, cousin Herbert says he must see you directly, quite alone," continued Clara, taking Katharine's hand, and pulling her towards the door. "Are you not very glad that cousin Herbert is come?" looking up in her face.

"Yes—no."

"Don't you love cousin Herbert, then?" asked the child in surprise. "How strange you look."

"You startled me bursting into my room so suddenly. Run, and tell Mr. Eustace that I am coming."

Away ran Clara, leaving Katharine to recover her composure, discomfited by the sudden announcement that cousin Herbert must see her directly—and alone. What could he have to say to her?

No sincere person could have praised the ease with which she entered the room; in fact, her *entré* was rather awkward, and she felt that it was, which increased her embarrassment, whilst her greeting of her visitor was less frank and warm than formerly. Nor was his manner unembarrassed, or in harmony with their part-

ing; it was not exactly cold—but studied; friendly—yet guarded, almost formal;—loverlike it was not—loverlike it seemed as if it never had been—never could be.

Katharine regained her composure;—or its semblance—after the usual questions and replies.

There was a short pause, and then Herbert Eustace spoke rapidly, but not with the clearness which generally distinguished his conversation; occasionally using words that he wished unused the succeeding moment.

"You must have been surprised, Miss Darrell, at my requesting an instant and private interview; I should not have so presumed on any other occasion; but I thought after hearing what I have to say that you might wish a temporary concealment."

"I do not understand you, Mr. Eustace," said Katharine rather proudly, amazed at his incomprehensible words and as incromprehensible manner.

"I beg your pardon; I mean—I thought you might wish to conceal for a time your change of name."

"Your words are less, and less to be understood; I have no intention of changing my name."

"You think so now, but when you have heard what I have to say—"

"I shall probably persist in my present intention," interrupted Katharine.

Herbert coloured, and endeavoured to rally his powers; but he would have horrified a clever diplomatist.

"I am most unfortunate to-day; the more clearly I endeavour to express myself, the more I confuse my subject. I had better attempt no preamble, but enter on my tale at once. I come from James Darrell."

"What of him?" asked Katharine, turning pale. "He promised to molest me no more;—he said he wished me nothing but good."

"He means you no harm. In the words of poor crazy Nan, and in fulfilment of her prophecy, he wishes to make you a lady."

"To make me a lady? I beg your pardon, Mr.

Eustace, but your manner—that is, your words, are so very extraordinary that I must request an explanation."

"Certainly, I am sorry my words and manner have been so very extraordinary and incomprehensible. I mean to say that Darrell has done his utmost to promote your good; and you must permit me to be the first to congratulate you on the prospect of becoming Lady Ermiston."

If Katharine had turned pale at the mention of her father, she looked paler still at the mention of her former lover; she gasped for breath, and then aware that Herbert's eye was on her, the blood rushed up to her very temples.

"I will not believe you intended insult, Mr. Eustace, but you should have known that I would not submit to be forced on the notice of any man; much less on one who, not only rejected my hand but refused my acquaintance. I know not what my father may have done to induce Lord Ermiston to change his prudent resolution; but whatever it may have been, it was without my knowledge and against my wishes. If you will be kind enough to explain this to his lordship it may save us both from vexation."

With a slight inclination of the head she rose to leave the room, but Herbert sprang forward to detain her.

"You have completely misunderstood me. I did not —I could not intend insult;—I meant Countess of Ermiston in your own right."

Katharine stared in utter bewilderment, and allowed him to lead her back to her seat, and make another attempt to explain what he had come purposely to reveal; and a most extraordinary revelation it was.

Having taken his invalid friend to a milder air in the West of England, and nursed him into tolerable health, Herbert had fixed the following day for his departure, intending to surprise the inhabitants of Farnley Lodge by his sudden presence; but, as he was taking his last walk among the rocks, a paper was put into his hands by a ragged little boy, containing an earnest request from Darrell that he would follow the bearer as he had

something to communicate of the utmost importance to Katharine.

He found Darrell in a wretched hut, and in a still more wretched state; worn almost to a skeleton with want and suffering, and obliged from penury and prudence to submit to deficiency of proper food and medical attendance. After leaving Cowford, pursuing his former courses, he had been committed on suspicion of having taken part in a robbery; and, in escaping from prison, received serious injury, owing to the breaking of the rope by which he was descending the outer wall. Less known in that neighbourhood than in any other part of England, and committed under another name, he hoped in the poor and solitary hut which he had selected as his lodging (the abode of an associate) to avoid detection, but if the officers of justice did not find him out, his own sins did; and he was fast sinking into the grave, puzzled how to perform his promise to Katharine, when, accidentally hearing of Herbert's being in the neighbourhood, he sent to request his presence, for the purpose of revealing the secret which he had so long kept, and thus securing his revenge on Lord Ermiston.

"Listen to me, sir," began Darrell on his entrance, "mind the words of the dying, and right the orphan, or the curse of the dead shall rest upon you, as it does on me. I made an orphan—and then wronged her. Do not interrupt me, I have not long to live; and my thoughts begin to wander. You know me only as James Darrell; but my real name is Dennis. My father was steward to Lord Mexington, and I should have succeeded him, but such as the son is, such was the father—he was dismissed for dishonesty; and he and his family forbidden to put foot on the estate. It was Lady Mexington's doing, and her haughty manner made the dismissal more galling. I shall never forget her scorn!—I swore revenge—I have had some—and will have more. I had received a good education for my station, and tried to turn it to account—but no one would employ me—my father's dismission for dishonesty stood in my way, and Lady Mexington's denunciation of the whole family

completed our ruin. One cannot starve, and if the world will not let one live honestly—one must live dishonestly; and I say the world is to blame. I joined with those who enter gentlemen's houses at their pleasure, and take thence what pleases them. Men call us burglars, and condemn us to be hanged; but they must catch us first. I determined that the plate at Mexington Hall should repay some of the evil done by its mistress's tongue to me and mine; and a night for our visit was fixed on between me and some more of the gang. My former knowledge of the house came into play, I was to enter before the doors were closed for the night, and when all others were asleep admit my friends.

"In my way thither, the day before, I met the tutor returning from the north.—Accident made me acquainted with the fact of his having a large sum of money about his person. Unable to procure a chaise, he took a horse, which I knew to be restive, from the last stage; and in his impatience chose a short cut. I saw him coming towards the narrow pass in the road, where I was standing, a bank above—a precipice below the path. I thought of his gold, and resolved to possess it. Concealing myself in a brake on the bank above, I struck his horse with stones just as he reached the narrow shelving path. The animal reared, kicked, and plunged over the edge of the precipice, as I had expected. I crept down the rocks, till I reached my victim;—he was quite dead, though the body was little crushed;—he could have suffered little, for I heard no groan.

"It was the first time I had taken life—I was a murderer! and I shuddered at the thought;—but there was no blood on my hands—I had had no struggle—I had struck no blow—I had only flung a stone—and that could scarcely be called murder.

"I took from the body the greater part of his money, and some papers, leaving his watch to avoid suspicion:—and suspicion was avoided, for all believed his death to be accidental.

"The papers put me in possession of a secret; the

deceased had been secretly married to Lady Caroline Eltringham some months before. I always take papers when they come in my way, as I may thus light upon something from the concealment or publicity of which I may compel a loan or a gift. The marriage certificate might be worth something.

"I succeeded in entering the Earl of Mexington's house on the following day, and concealing myself unperceived; but the bustle caused by the finding and bringing home the tutor's body, with Lady Caroline's alarming illness, which I learnt from the exclamations of those passing near my hiding-place, made me think it more prudent to delay the robbery, and I was creeping out to stop my confederates, when steps coming my way again forced me to conceal myself.

"Turning in at an open door, I hid myself in a cupboard; but it so happened that those from whom I was hiding came into the same room. They were Lady Mexington and her old nurse, as good-for-nothing an old hag as ever lived. By the help of the tutor's papers I understood that the new-born infant, which the nurse held in her arms, was Lady Caroline's; and that, if not absolutely dead, as they hoped and believed, it would stand no chance of having its life prolonged through their exertions. The grand question seemed to be how to dispose of the body. The plan which they proposed for this purpose would have prevented my leaving the house unseen, and made the discovery of my accomplices more than probable, so I thought it safest to step from my hiding-place, and offer to take charge of the child, and keep the secret if handsomely rewarded. I knew too much for Lady Mexington to refuse my terms, and dare me to put in practice my threat of disclosure, or even to question me as to the cause of my presence, so the money and the child were given me, but given reluctantly, in spite of my promised secrecy; and I laughed to think that the haughty countess, who had blighted all my hopes in life, not only felt my power, but dreaded it. She knew me, and she understood my triumph;—but she had no alternative. Lady Caroline

was to be given to Lord Yerbury to pay her father's gambling debt, and please her mother's ambition;—of course not a word must be said of the child. I did not tell her that I had proof of her daughter's marriage; thinking that I could frighten her out of more money by keeping silence on this point.

"The old nurse assured her ladyship that the child was dead—she spoke as she wished—that child is living now.

"Some time before, I had married Ann—Crazy Nan as they call her now, poor thing! She was not crazy then, but as gentle and pretty a girl as one would wish to see, though she was of the wild gipsy breed, and somewhat over-fond of dress. She was obedient and loving, and not ignorant; being so pretty some lady had taken a fancy to her, and taught her many things above her birth; and she had nice manners then—it was I who drove her mad; and yet the poor, wild creature dotes upon me still. Well!—that matters to no one but myself.

"I told the men that we could not rob Mexington that night; and then took the baby to Ann and her mother, telling them to do the best they could to make it live; and so they did; and my wife soon loved it nearly as well as one which she had just lost. She had it christened Katharine—and it passed for ours.

"We robbed Mexington months after; but either the countess did not guess why I was in the house that night, or did not dare to name the circumstance; and no one else suspected me. But I was not always to be so fortunate, and being tried for a robbery, I was sentenced to fourteen years' transportation.

"I would have threatened Lady Mexington into an interference in my behalf, but she was abroad at the time, and my trial followed too closely on my committal to leave me time to send to Italy, could I have found the means: so I was compelled to submit. I might hereafter return to England, and the child and the certificate played against each other, as might best suit my plans, would insure me a competence at least.

"I comforted Ann as well as I could, bidding her take great care of the papers and the child. Poor girl! she did the best she could, but my going, and her anxiety before the trial, made her the poor, crazy creature you have seen her.

"I was tried under my real name of Dennis, though I had long been known among my associates as Darrell; and I desired Nan to say that her husband was dead. Strange, that in all her crazy fancies she still maintained my death to others, though she wandered over the country under the idea that she should find me out; and this is why she would never have a settled home, leaving the child at Cowford, though very fond of her, because she was too weak to tramp the land with her. Nor did she break my strict injunctions to keep Katharine's real birth concealed, though her love of dress and title caused her strange, rambling talk about being a lady, and making the child one; and it is probable induced her to part with her so readily to Mrs. Arnold, for on my return she told me triumphantly 'that little Kate was just like a lady!—looked and talked like a lady!—and that it was all her doing!'

"On reaching England after the expiration of my sentence, I found the young, smart, pretty wife I had left behind, a dirty, crazy, old woman; changed in all things but her love for me, yet never aware that she was not as smart, and as pretty, as when we had parted. She knew soon enough that I was changed, for her nonsense was ever in my way; and sometimes I was a brute. I have done wrong enough in my time; but now that I am dying this seems to me the worst wrong of all;—and to die without seeing her, and saying I am sorry!—Well! it can't be helped. But you will be kind to her, Mr. Eustace, and little Kate, as she used to call her, she will be kind, too—I am sure she will. She seldom knew of my wicked plans; and tried to dissuade me when she did.

"I was very angry on finding that Mrs. Arnold had not left Katharine a penny, as I had kept out of sight not to prevent her marriage, (which Nan's folly once

thwarted,) thinking to share her riches as her father. I am sure there has been some false play by that Millar, mean wretch as he is. It can't matter to me one burglary more or less, I have done too many in my time to be squeamish, so I may as well own that I and my friends robbed Beechen Cliff, the butler kindly leaving a door open at our request. I was too skilful to wake poor Kate, who had like to have been hanged for an accomplice, having been seen with me the day before. I had not intended to speak to her then, but Nan was with her, and, I fancied, telling her who she was; so I thought it best to convince her that I was her father.

"I went to Lady Mexington and demanded money—she talked of my promises, scolding in no gentle terms, but at last gave half what I asked, and hinted at a small annuity dependant on my silence.

"Lady Yerbury, who was supposed to be dying, could no longer further her ambition, so the story of the child would do comparatively little mischief; and Lady Mexington thought her simple denial would be sufficient to hush any accusation by a convicted felon. From that moment I resolved that Katharine Morven, Countess of Ermiston, should have her rights; revenge and interest alike urged me to this. Her father was next heir to the late earl; and I owe his present lordship no gratitude: he feared to befriend me lest he should be laughed at, and left Katharine to bear her shame alone. You behaved like a man; and I rely on you to right her.

"I should have told all this before, but I knew no one would believe me without the papers; and those I have not been able to get. Nan owns that she has hid them somewhere, because she fancied I wanted to burn them, and not make the child a lady, as she calls it, but she will not give them up for threats or entreaties. She once hinted that Katharine knew where they were; but, if so, she would scarcely have borne the reproach of having such a father for so long a time. Draw up a statement of all this; and I will sign it on oath, only

make haste, or it will be too late.—I shall cheat the hangman yet," he added with a horrid laugh.

Herbert drew up the statement, and had it duly signed, whilst one of the witnesses, a pious clergyman, spoke to Darrell of his past life—his future hopes; but the dying man scoffed at his words, striving to hide the terrors which oppressed him. His only expressed anxiety was to see Nan, and ask her forgiveness; but this was denied him—before night he was a corpse.

Such was the tale that Herbert Eustace related to the wondering Katharine, with more clearness than might have been expected from his embarrassed opening.

"Then I have not for my mother a poor, crazy gipsy —nor for my father a thief, or something worse!—but dear Lady Yerbury was my mother. How glad I am I knew her, though but for so short a time; and that she loved me," exclaimed Katharine with a lightened heart, the large tears standing in her eyes. "No one need shun me now, and look upon me with suspicion."

"You need entertain no fear on that score; no one will shun the young, the rich, the lovely Countess of Ermiston; she will be courted, flattered, to her heart's content."

"I wish it had been any other title," remarked Katharine quickly.

"I would it had," responded Herbert still more quickly.

"Or no title; only that no guilt or shame should rest upon my parents; for that I am very, very thankful."

"You will soon learn from your grandmother how to value wealth and rank."

"I have already learnt from Mr. Eustace that it does not require wealth or rank to insure his generous kindness. Does he advise me to become worldly?"

Katharine was hurt at his strange manner; and showed she was.

"I fear I am in an evil mood to-day, and must entreat you to judge me mercifully, Miss Darrell—Lady Ermiston—I should say."

"No, you should not say so. I would be Katharine

Darrell still to my old friends; at least until my claim to a new name shall have been established."

"That is the point on which I would inquire," he said, making no comment on the former part of her reply, though look and tone showed that he was not untouched. "Do you know any thing of these papers? Without the certificate of the marriage we may find some difficulty in establishing your rights. I can hear nothing of Nan Darrell."

Katharine considered a moment, and the scene in the old windmill came to her mind. She related the circumstance, and it was decided that some one should search the ruin immediately.

"Whom would you wish employed in this search? And in whose hands shall I place this paper, that your claims may be at once enforced?" inquired Herbert, not without embarrassment.

Katharine was silent for some moments: and then spoke with her usual frankness, though her cheek glowed the while.

"If Mr. Eustace is weary of showing kindness—if he is unwilling to take further trouble on my account, perhaps he will advise me whom else to employ?—but if not wearied—if not unwilling, wealth and title will be more prized if owed to one who was my friend when I had none beside to help me, and who sought me out when others shunned me."

However cynical might have been Herbert's mood before, it was impossible to resist this appeal, the faltering tone giving greater power to the words; and losing his former guarded manner he poured forth thanks and offers of service in overwhelming profusion, concluding a little more soberly.

"I would I had others to deal with than Lord Ermiston and Lady Mexington. I may be accused of gratifying spite, envy, and malice."

"And of what shall not I be accused? What may not Lord Ermiston think of me? I would readily yield the title and half the fortune to have any other competitor than your cousin; but if you will undertake

the unpleasant task, I know all will be done with delicacy and consideration. I feel, deeply feel for his change of fortune, more particularly being the instrument to effect it; and would do everything to soften the hardship. I must hope and trust that he will believe me incapable of any other wish than to free myself from a shameful parentage."

"Cousin Herbert come, and would see Katharine directly—and quite alone! What can the matter be?" said Mrs. Colvin, entering at the moment, and veiling her curiosity, and some little reproof, under an appearance of gaiety.

"Something very strange, but very true! my inquisitive cousin," replied Herbert, advancing to shake hands.

"Indeed! Have you guardian-like been proposing a husband to your ward?"

"No," answered Herbert abruptly, adding more gaily, in an under tone, glancing at the blushing Katharine, "only advising a change of name."

"I am not to be informed of this momentous secret, then!" remarked Mrs. Colvin rather pettishly.

"Indeed but you are, dear Mrs. Colvin. Bid your cousin tell you."

"Come Herbert; I am dying with impatience."

"Since Miss Darrell will be so imprudent as to entrust her secret to your keeping, I cannot help it. Finding novels and romantic tales the fashion, we have been trying our hand in that way, though with no intention of publishing just at present, unless we could propitiate the critics. Miss Darrell, instead of being Miss Darrell, the child of a demented mother, and an acquisitive father, shall turn out to be, in the true novel style, the daughter of Lady Yerbury, and Countess of Ermiston in her own light, as crazy Nan would say. Were this only written in a book, one half the world would say how unnatural! the other half just like what one has read a thousand times; but being a real, true, and creditable story, the world can only say—Prodigious!"

"Is this true, Herbert, or only one of your good stories?"

"Out upon you, Mrs. Colvin! you know very well that ever since I ceased to be Sir Herbert Eustace, Bart., I have held it, with Mr. Bampton, unjustifiable, unwarrantable, and discreditable to tell a good story; but I suppose I must explain, some people are so stupid."

He did explain, and his cousin was delighted, laughing, crying, and embracing Katharine; telling her one moment that she loved her a thousand times more for being Lady Yerbury's daughter, the next declaring that she could not love her better than she had done before.

"Delightful! you will take precedence of your haughty grandmother, (your's being the older title) and triumph over Lord Ermiston, shaming his timid selfishness. Justice done! All your wrongs avenged in the true poetical style."

"Oh, Mrs. Colvin! how can you speak thus?" said Katharine reproachfully. "It is a great distress to me depriving Lord Ermiston of his title; and I can never triumph over him, I hope I should not over any one."

"Ay, there is the difference, Katharine, I felt for you, not as you. I see how it will be; the romance concluded, as such romances generally are. Hostilities suspended; then an alliance offensive and defensive, as the diplomatists say. His lordship will know how to secure himself."

"You wrong Lord Ermiston; he may be timid—he cannot be mean."

"Time will show this; but I wronged you, which lies much more heavily on my conscience. How delighted the Banhams will be! I must invite them to dine here to-morrow."

"Stop! stop! I may not be able to prove my right."

"You shall, of that I am resolved. Yet, alas! alas! as the moralists say, there is no pleasure without its attendant pain. With this fine title you will not remain at Farnley Lodge—Clara will be a dunce; and Charles and I must take to quarrelling for amusement. I won-

der what he will say to all this?—something very original!"

"He will say that he is very glad to hear of Miss Darrell's good fortune, and happy to observe that she is more steady than his giddy wife," said Mr. Colvin, who had been standing behind his lady many minutes unperceived.

Three days!—three anxious days—and Herbert returned with the papers, which he had found in the old windmill just as Crazy Nan had left them—the very papers that were wanted to establish Katharine's claim; since, besides the certificate, there were letters, addressed to Mr. Morven by his wife, in which she alluded to the prospect of becoming a mother.

Of Frederick Morven's right to succeed to the Earldom of Ermiston, had he lived, though there were several heirs between him and the title at that time, there was no doubt; and it being one of those gallant peerages which did not exclude the female line, proving Katharine to be his daughter established her claim.

Lady Yerbury in her hurried narrative, had from delicacy to Katharine, suppressed the names of Morven and Ermiston; or had not deemed her husband's succession to the title, had he lived, of sufficient importance to be mentioned.

Indefatigable in her cause, the next day saw Herbert on his way to town, to lay Katharine's claims before Lord Ermiston and Lady Mexington.

His lordship showed surprise and some vexation at the statement; but other feelings, if he indulged them, were not revealed.

He thanked Miss Darrell and his cousin for the kind and delicate way in which the information had been conveyed. Of course he should not dispute the justice of her claim could she bring proofs to establish it; but not being learned in the law, he must beg to consult his solicitor before giving any decided answer; yet whatever might be his decision, he fully agreed with the fair claimant that everything should be done on both sides in the most friendly spirit. He should be proud to call

Miss Darrell cousin; and would rather yield his title to her, if it must be so, than to any other.

Nothing could be more honourable and gentlemanly; and Herbert left the house glad that his unpleasant mission was concluded, regretting his cousin's change of fortune, admiring his elegant manners, and wondering what were his actual feelings towards Katharine.

"What is the matter, Ermiston?" asked his mother anxiously, entering her son's room some minutes after. "Are you ill? You are as pale as death."

"This is the matter!" he exclaimed, starting up at her question. "You made me resign Katharine Darrell —you threatened your curse if I, an earl!—married her—a beggar!—now she is the countess—and I the beggar! and gentle as she is, she must triumph in my fall:—Katharine Darrell is Lady Ermiston—I but plain Edgar Morven."

Herbert Eustace watched Lady Mexington keenly whilst revealing Katharine's birth; but he learnt little from his scrutiny, for being just returned from a drive, her veil was down on his entrance, and she sat with her back to the light. A slight start showed her surprise, but any other sign that might indicate her real feelings was suppressed; what was passing within could only be guessed in part from two exclamations sufficiently abrupt to be natural.

"The girl should have first laid her claims before me, instead of submitting them to her cousin. If this prove true my granddaughter will be a countess;—more—Countess of Ermiston, and Margaret Morven and her son must pine in obscurity."

At the conclusion of the explanation she remarked, "I must have time to think. My solicitor shall look over the papers which you have brought, and I shall then know how to decide. Dennis speaks falsely on many points, and is not to be implicitly believed."

In drawing up Darrell's statement, Herbert had rather softened some of his charges against Lady Mexington; but enough remained to bring disgrace on her ladyship should the statement be made public by its production

on a trial. Perhaps she believed her denial of the facts would be considered enough, against the word of a man convicted by his own confession of robbery and murder; at least she showed no anxiety for its suppression whilst in her visitor's presence.

The next day Herbert received a cold note from her ladyship, thanking him for his pains he had taken in her granddaughter's cause, whose claim she would see established; and requesting him, under the plea of saving him further trouble, to send all the papers to her solicitor, offering to defray his expenses. He crushed her note when he read it; and snatching up a pen replied on the instant.

He declined giving up the papers without Lady Erminston's permission, who had entrusted them to him, adding that he should set off in a few hours for Farnley Lodge, if her ladyship had letter or message to send.

Her ladyship sent nothing by him, but Katharine received by post a letter from her haughty grandmother acknowledging the relationship, and commanding, rather than requesting her to join her in town immediately; to facilitate which she would send carriage and servants for her journey the next day.

It never rains but it pours! The same post brought a letter from one of the creditors of Mr. Millar, who had been found dead in a pond a short time before, not without suspicion of suicide, a suspicion confirmed by the deranged state of his affairs, stating, that in looking over the papers of the deceased, the enclosed deed had been found, and was forwarded at Mrs. Millar's request, who was lying at the point of death. It was a deed of gift of four thousand pounds to Katharine from Mrs. Arnold, dated some years back, and so drawn as to place it beyond that lady's power to recal it. The interest was to accumulate until Katharine's marriage, or the death of her kind protectress, when principal and interest were to be at her sole disposal.

Mrs. Arnold had heard of more than one instance of young persons having been brought up above their stations, and then left destitute through the indolence

or caprice of their protectors; and to guard against this she had signed this deed on first becoming aware that her *protegée* was receiving an education, and had already acquired tastes which would make a menial situation a daily martyrdom. The sudden death of Mr. Payne, the only person who knew of the paper, had subjected Katharine to those very evils from which her kind friend had sought to guard her. The deed being complete in itself, and the four thousand pounds a distinct investment, it had not been named in the will.

It may be as well to conclude the history of the Millars at once, and clear Mrs. Arnold from every blame, but procrastination, and too great a reliance on the good principles of the selfish and the worldly. She had delayed altering her will because unable to decide how much to leave her favourite. Her affection increasing daily, she was daily inclined to leave her a larger portion, but finding some difficulty in determining the exact amount, put off the decision from time to time till her return from Sallowfield, when, feeling that her very kindness in raising Katharine above her sphere had subjected her to the pain of Ermiston's rejection, she resolved that the will should be amended on the morrow.

How much is deferred to that fatal hour, which to many never comes? Before retiring to rest, she had stated her intentions in writing; and in the morning, on hearing that she could not see her lawyer, aware of the growing confusion in her own mind, had placed the papers in the hands of the Millars, binding them by a solemn promise to fulfil her wishes: and so well did they satisfy her of their integrity and good will towards Katharine, that she died without any anxiety on the subject.

Believing the Millars rich, as they asserted, and entirely ignorant of the will in which she had left them nearly all her property, (never having given them a hint of becoming her heirs, whilst general opinion gave all her wealth to Katharine,) she imagined that they would consider themselves handsomely dealt by, in

being left the third of her possessions. The other two-thirds with Beechen Cliff she bequeathed to Katharine, to revert to them should she die unmarried or without children.

It has been seen how the Millars kept their solemn promise to the dying; but even in the matter of possessing, to say nothing of enjoying, they gained little by their perjury. Mr. Millar was by no means the rich man he had been considered; he knew the advantage of appearing wealthy; but in reality, was encumbered with debts, and entangled in dangerous speculations, having long looked to Mrs. Arnold's fortune to free him from his difficulties. That fortune became legally, though not honourably his; but those difficulties were not removed;—his speculations turned out ill—he would still make a show to the world—his creditors would wait no longer, and his death alone saved him from a prison, and being gazetted as a bankrupt. His wife died shortly after, suffering much in mind and body; and it was from the ravings of her remorse, and the testimony of Mrs. Carter, who now told what she had overheard concerning the promise, that the truth was known. The deed of gift had not been discovered till after Mr. Millar's death; at least, so said his wife.

We will not say that Katharine felt no vexation at this intelligence; no resentment towards the Millars for their dishonourable conduct, and the evils to which that conduct had subjected her; as well as regret that Beechen Cliff was now in the hands of another: she did feel regret, vexation, and resentment. She was but human, with human faults and weakness; yet her first exclamation only showed her devoted affection for her benefactress.

"No one can blame dear Mrs. Arnold now! She was not unthinking, and cruel, as some say, but remembered the child of her care and love even in her dying hour!"

"And you ought to have been rich and happy, all the time you were poor and miserable. You can never forgive the Millars," remarked Mrs. Colvin.

"Do not fan my vexation and resentment into a fiercer flame ; I already feel too much of both ; and am shocked to find how I am fretting at dear Beechen Cliff being in the hands of strangers. I did, indeed, require adversity to check my pride and vanity ; and had I been always rich I should not have had such cause for gratitude as now. I should not have known half Mrs. Carter's virtues, or owed so much to you, your husband, and your cousin. Kindness is of far more worth than gold—and gratitude than years of flattery. I only hope the countess may be as happy as your pet and companion; but I am afraid of myself ; and while thankful for noble birth, and the means of doing good, am beginning to feel a thousand anxieties which I never had before. I do verily believe, I have lost my childlike, frolic mood forever, and have entered into the full state of womanhood with all its pains and penalties."

I see no symptom of such a misfortune," observed Mrs. Colvin. "What say you, Herbert?"

"That I have too poor abilities to read

'The thoughts of a woman's mind.'"

"When people are too proud to ask, they must bear the blame of their ignorance," remarked Mr. Colvin. "If those who think themselves wise would but follow the example of us plain matter-of-fact people, and question till they thoroughly understand, instead of taking things for granted, the mass of human misery would be greatly lessened."

"The idea of a woman's being questioned, and cross-questioned as to the state of her heart, as you question and cross-question poachers and ploughboys, bailiffs and butchers! Just as if a woman's heart were a preserve, or a fallow-field! Don't you know that it is a perfect garden, beautiful and fragrant; rich with flowers of a thousand lovely hues, some with thorns, and some without:—bright birds flitting round, filling the air with harmony; and a clear fountain playing in the centre, its diamond spray coquetting with the sunbeams, *àpropos*

to woman smiling through her tears? There, Charles, remember all that, for I intend to make you very romantic," said his laughing wife. Then turning to Katharine: "When will you come to Farnley Lodge again? Clara has the fancy that Lady Mexington is the Ogress of the fairy tale, and that you will certainly be devoured."

"To tell the truth, I am little less alarmed myself, having a due or an undue horror of my grim grandmother.

"I thought as much, and know how it will be. She will keep you quite to herself, or marry you to some kindred monster;—sell you for more wealth and rank."

"She shall do neither," replied Katharine, decidedly.

"Ay, you talk boldly in her absence; but I am sadly afraid you will be too dutiful."

"I am sadly afraid that I shall not be dutiful enough. Love her I never can; and my ideas of the duty I owe her are very low."

"That is right, Katharine; only keep up your spirit; but she will put on one of her terrific frowns, threaten you with bread and water and the dungeon-keep of your own castle; and you will yield as poor Caroline yielded."

"We shall see. The thought of her conduct to my poor mother always stirs me up to rebellion."

"Well, that does sound rather womanly, I admit; but I think you had better engage Herbert to be your champion, he is just fit for a *Preux Chevalier;* a little too flighty perhaps, but he will mend of that, when weighted with a little more dull law. Suppose you demand his aid."

"He has already promised to protect me."

"Then you are safe."

"No such certainty," said Herbert. "*Preux Chevaliers* could not rescue or protect suffering damsels, unless those damsels relied on their prowess, and solicited their aid; and damsels have occasionally been blinded by spells to their own peril. Lady Mexington detests the very sight of me, and will never let me play

Preux Chevalier if she can help it.—And may not Lady Ermiston yield to her spells ? I foretell the cut direct, or at best a mere formal bow."

"If your foretelling speaks your wishes, Mr. Eustace, so let it be ; if not, should there be formality it will be entirely of your own making. I can never forget how much, how very much, I am indebted to your kindness."

"My foretelling did not speak my wishes, only my fears ; and those I will endeavour to forget, and rely on your resisting Lady Mexington's influence."

"Do so. Come, Clara, and help me put away my books, since we are to set off so early to-morrow."

"Why don't you marry, Herbert ?" asked Mrs. Colvin abruptly, a few moments after Katharine had left the room.

"I am no longer a rich baronet to ask and have ; and if I sought a wife might have cause to say with Robert de Wace :

'Fool went I out—fool came I home.'"

"Nonsense ! you have already won a tolerable income with the prospect of a better ; besides, you might choose a lady-love with fortune. Why not have Katharine ? It would make me so happy to see my cousin united to my friend ; the two people I love best in the world, next to myself, my quiet husband, and riotous child."

"Lady Ermiston will be expected, and may expect to make a great match ; and I prefer making my own fortune to receiving it from my wife."

"So you will not have Katharine from a punctilio of pride, for it is nothing else, thou most wise barrister."

"Have Katharine ! what an expression ! Besides, a few days since you believed her still attached to Ermiston."

"Ay, there's the rub ! I am afraid she has some girlish fancy about first love, and its being very generous and woman-like

'To love on through all ills.'

And now there would be something so splendid—nay, sublime, in restoring him his title with her hand, that a more commonplace person than Katharine might be dazzled by the glory. In truth, if she loves him still, her woman's heart will feel more delight in this than in all the splendours which surround her; but he must feel some difficulty in coming forward; so try what you can do in the meantime. Never was girl more grateful, and gratitude may win your cause, aided by a little pique, which she must have felt at his rejection."

"Thank you, cousin; but I have no wish to win a wife through pique; or even gratitude. I would be the first—the last—the only one, in the heart I win. If she loves Ermiston, though but so little, that a mote would balance it, she will be his, through very nobleness. And why should I seek her now, when a few weeks since, with all your regard, you would have objected to her becoming my bride? My wooing, whenever it may be, shall not even wear the semblance of interest."

"Take care that your not wooing wears not the reality of pride," remarked Mr. Colvin, whose plain, common sense told him secrets which more lively spirits did not suspect.

CHAPTER VIII.

We met!—'twas in a crowd!—
HAYNES BAYLEY.

"I VERY much doubt if Lady Mexington will thank me for escorting you to town, thinking her man and maid quite equal to the task," observed Herbert Eustace, as he adjusted Katharine's shawl in the hall at Farnley Lodge.

"Then I must thank you doubly. Remember, you have promised to present me to her; your presence will lessen the awkwardness of a first meeting."

If Lady Mexington had no thanks in her heart for Herbert's escort, she had them on her lips, whilst her manner towards Katharine was all she wished; no pretence of affection—no parade of words, but a quiet and rather kind reception, with no allusion to the past; and such, except when roused by opposition, was her ordinary demeanour. Once chafe her spirit, let those calm it who could! She must have her way;—if opposed, the torrent of her wrath swept all before it.

The next day Herbert Eustace called to take a hurried leave of Katharine, being called away by sudden business. He might return within the week—he might not return for some time—it was all uncertain; and as Katharine listened to his departing step, and looked round the rather gloomy room, and then at her haughty

grandmother, she felt a sinking of the heart, and a foreboding of evil.

It was her first visit to town. She who had been accustomed to the fresh, free air of the country, the bright, green fields, and the singing of wild birds, was oppressed by the heavy air of the great city—the hum of its countless crowds; and felt sad, and desolate, as she looked on the dark houses opposite, or listened to the incessant roll of carriages.

Of all the throng that crowded by not one was known to her; she had no feeling and no sympathy with any there—and they had none with her. She knew but one in all that vast metropolis—Lord Ermiston;—and him she dreaded to encounter. Her tears fell at the thought. Many probably envied the young, the rich, the lovely Countess of Ermiston. What would they have thought had they seen her weeping there? It is the temper of our mind which brings us happiness, not state or circumstance. A tear falling on her hand roused her attention; she had been weeping unconsciously. She looked up—her grandmother's keen eye was on her; and there was a stern knitting of her brows which boded little good.

"I am very silly to feel thus—but a crowded city is to me the most melancholy of places," remarked Katharine in an apologetic tone.

"You will soon mend of that folly," observed her grandmother coldly. "You go with me this evening to your uncle's to be introduced to some of your relatives; in a short time you will cease to consider London lonely."

Katharine hinted a wish for a day's quiet; but the countess was resolute. She would yield to her wish of not attending any very large parties, given by strangers, till after her first change of mourning for Lady Yerbury; but to refuse to visit friends and relatives was a folly that she could not countenance.

"I have no wish to shun friends and relatives; but I do wish to live retired, till my claims shall be allowed or disallowed."

"The very reason why I choose you to go out," said

her grandmother, assuming at once the command which she intended to maintain. "Lady Ermiston must be introduced to the friends and connections of her family, as Lady Ermiston, taking at once her proper station in society. Leave it to those who have no right to the title which they have usurped to hide in corners."

"Lord Ermiston had no reason to believe himself an usurper, and I should be very sorry to do anything which could be construed into a want of feeling or delicacy."

Lady Mexington looked at her searchingly, with a sterner knitting of her brows.

"Feeling and delicacy towards him who rejected you so scornfully! Where is your maidenly pride? Would you kneel at his feet—hold up your coronet—and pray him to accept of it—and you?"

"I would do nothing unbecoming a high-born maiden, and there can never again be question of a union between us," replied Katharine, undismayed by her wrath, though her colour rose at the sarcasm.

"I trust so; my malediction on you if you think to wed with him. My haughty cousin shall be humbled—Margaret Morven and her dainty son shall go back to penury and pride; they must have time, forsooth, ere they decide on yielding that to which they have no right! Unable to dispute your being Frederick Morven's lawful heiress, they profess to doubt the descent of the title in the female line, in spite of proof to that effect. You may thank yourself and your silly advisers for this, asking your title as a favour, instead of demanding it as a right; permitting them to see that you may be tampered with. Fortunately, the folly of asking no arrears was not on paper, consequently not binding; and I shall order my solicitor to write to Mr. Morven claiming all that is due, even to the uttermost farthing—unless he will acknowledge your rights at once."

"Pardon me, Lady Mexington, but this must not be. My word is pledged that no arrears shall be claimed, since, at the worst, he was an innocent usurper; and I would not recal my words even if I could. Forgive

me if I say that I am the person to be consulted on this point: and I will consent to no act that can be considered ungenerous to Mrs. Morven, or her son; their trial must be hard to bear without any aggravation."

Lady Mexington gazed in surprise on the slight girl before her, looking still younger than she really was. She who had been accustomed to rule all—was she to be thwarted by a mere child? Her eyes flashed as she spoke.

"You the person to be consulted! And you will not consent! Learn obedience and humility; and, baby as you are, be thankful that you have a relative who will assert your rights. You are too young to guide yourself."

"I am one-and-twenty, madam; and the laws of my country give me rule over myself at that age."

"Dare you bandy words with me, boasting of a power which you are unfit to use? Let me hear no more of this! I stand in the place of your parents. I command —I expect I will have implicit, unquestioning obedience, and shall write as I proposed."

"For my sake—for your sake, madam, I entreat you not. Rather than suffer it, I will assert my power, and employ some other solicitor who will conduct the suit, if such must be, on just and honourable terms. Shall I so needing forgiveness myself exact to the uttermost from others? It is for you to decide how far a publication of the evidence would be agreeable or desirable; no shame shall rest on my mother's name."

Lady Mexington's cheek grew pale as she glared on the daring girl who withstood that rage before which so many wills had bowed. Katharine shrank not from the gaze, though her own cheek paled at the encounter, and after a short scrutiny the haughty countess turned away.

"You may go," she said in a hoarse voice, waving her hand for her departure. "I yield to your wishes for this once; beware how you oppose mine for the future!"

"I am sorry," began Katharine.

"I want no excuse—begone!"

Katharine went, and the countess gave way to the rage which she had not dared to display in her presence.

"She shall do my bidding yet," she muttered. "She has her father's spirit, and his compelling eye when roused, gentle as she seems at other times; but that spirit shall yet bend to mine—her mother's did, and so shall her's. I hated her father—and she is like him;—I saw the likeness at the first glance."

When next they met, Lady Mexington showed no trace of anger, but greater kindness than before; and Katharine, thankful for the change, did all she could to please her.

Days passed, and Lady Ermiston, having been introduced to innumerable friends and relatives, could no longer complain with justice that she knew no one in all that passing crowd, yet she often caught herself sighing to return to Farnley Lodge, though ashamed of her discontent, she endeavoured to subdue it. Acquainted with many, she was intimate with none; and there was something chilling and repulsive to her warm, frank heart, in her haughty grandmother, even in her kindest and most gracious moods; though the countess, won by Katharine's respectful attention, and pleased by the admiration she excited, began to view her with regard as well as pride.

"Do they call this a small party?" asked Katharine as she entered a drawing room, in one of the fashionable squares, splendidly lit, and she considered sufficiently filled.

"To be sure, child. It is a very small party for London; and the dowager, Lady Haddingly, is my particular friend."

The Marquis of Haddingly, the bachelor son of the hostess, joined Katharine on her entrance, and showed no inclination to quit her side; nor did she wish that he should, for having met him nearly every day since her arrival in town, she was glad, amid so many strangers, to have a comparatively old acquaintance to talk with. Her animated manner was always particularly pleasing to those with whom she was conversing; and others

who could see but not hear occasionally judged the subject of her discourse to be more interesting than it really was.

The marquis had been relating some adventure in Switzerland, to which she had paid devoted attention, whilst the changing expression of her features had been peculiarly flattering, when chancing to look up she met lord Ermiston's eyes fixed inquiringly upon her.

It was the first time they had met since the passage in the steamboat, and awkward and embarrassed from the remembrance of that meeting and their former engagement, and uncertain whether he would bow, or expect her to do so, she turned away in confusion, a confusion increased by the consciousness that the attention of Lord Haddingly and others was attracted towards her.

A beckon from Lady Mexington was a great relief; and she remained by her side after answering the question for which she had been summoned.

The departure of some of the company caused a crowding towards the spot where Katharine was standing, and the blonde scarf of a lady, who was endeavouring to pass, became entangled in her dress. The lady and the gentleman on whose arm she was leaning turned to apologise and disengage the scarf—they were Mrs. Morven and Lord Ermiston.

All felt the awkwardness of the adventure, but Katharine's embarrassment was most apparent. After a slight hesitation, Mrs. Morven and her son both bowed; and the latter, whilst disengaging the blonde, apologised with his usual grace. Katharine replied with winning sweetness, laying the blame on the crowd, and commenting on the assembly, considering that to be a neutral subject incapable of awakening any unpleasant feeling, being anxious to prove that she felt no resentment—sought no triumph. His lordship answered in the same strain.—The crowd dispersed—and Lord Ermiston and his mother bowed and passed on.

Let who will abuse the heat and the cold, the rain and the sunshine, as subjects of discourse! How could the world go on, or at least visiting, without such neutral, un-

offending topics? Scandal is wicked—politics dangerous —fashion frivolous—literature blue—science laboured. How could one entertain one's friends if one might not growl at the dust, or wonder at the rain? Yes! yes! to mud, and to dust—to rain, and to sunshine—to wind, and to calm—to heat, and to frost—be glory and honour! England is, indeed, a favoured land! With her variable climate, there need be no dearth of conversation ; and with the addition of rail-roads, and suspension bridges, one may talk for ever without offending—or informing any one ; perfectly guiltless of expressing an idea, or awakening one. What a happiness to have been born an English woman!

The marquis again sought Katharine's side, and flattered by the attention which she bestowed on his sense, laid aside his usual coxcombry and folly ; whilst she forgot, or rather never imagined that her earnest attention might give rise to comment or conjecture. In the midst of the recital of one of his lordship's continental adventures, she turned suddenly to the right, whence she had heard the name of Eustace.

Herbert was standing a few paces off, and returning her bow immediately approached, though not, she thought, with such alacrity as he might have shown.

"I need not ask how you are, but shall send a postscript to Clara, assuring her that Lady Ermiston in town is still more admired—and loved," he added after a pause, "than was Miss Darrell at Farnley Lodge ; the silly child fancied that you would miss the affection of its inhabitants. Have you any message? I write to-morrow."

Lady Ermiston hesitated ;—she was annoyed—she did not like Herbert's manner.

"Come, Katharine, I am waiting for you," said Lady Mexington.

"Allow me!" interposed the marquis, offering his arm to Katharine, who, as Herbert brew back, could not decline it.

Lady Mexington, resigning her granddaughter to his care, passed on with her own escort, bowing graciously to Mr. Eustace ; and Katharine was obliged to follow ;

but she paused one moment to say : "Give my love to Mrs. Colvin and Clara."

Herbert bowed without reply, whilst the marquis whispered—"I could not keep honest with such a temptation, but should retain that treasure for myself."

Katharine's look (she did not speak) was by no means flattering, she was vexed with Herbert, herself, and the marquis.

Her message was so very commonplace—but she thought Lord Haddingly's remark was more so.

Lady Mexington was mistaken; the carriage was not waiting, as she had said; and the marquis left them in the cloak room whilst he went to make inquiries. Katharine acquired two pieces of information during his absence.

"Eustace has been back these four days, I met him at Horlock's on Monday; and to judge from what I saw there and here, the pretty Mary Silverton will soon cease to bear her maiden name," observed a Mr. Panton.

"And the Countess of Ermiston will shortly be advanced to a marquisate. How I envied Haddingly that delightful flirtation in the corner! It is a pity that her title should be lost in a higher one; she ought to give herself to some poor wretch of a younger son," replied his friend.

"Yourself, I suppose; but—hush—" and the young men walked away, having caught a glimpse of lady Mexington.

So, Herbert Eustace had been returned four days, yet had not called, in spite of his parting promise; and had made no excuse—had not even approached her till she had bowed. Had he been so fully occupied with pretty Mary Silverton?

"Are you asleep, child?" asked lady Mexington sharply, as they were returning home. "I have spoken twice and received no answer."

"I beg your pardon. The carriages make so much noise; and my country ears are not yet accustomed to the din."

"You have heard me very well at other times. I ask why you refused the marquis permission to call on you to-morrow with his sketches, pleading a visit which might just as well have been deferred?"

"Because I did not wish to see him," replied Katharine with a coolness which provoked the countess.

"A plain answer, certainly; and a simple one to the outward ear; I trust it has no hidden meaning. Do you propose playing the fool or the coquette?"

"Neither; with your good leave, grandmamma."

"Both, I suspect. Take care; the marquis is not a person to be trifled with."

"I would trifle with no one."

"Then why decline his visit?"

Katharine hesitated.

"Speak, girl!" said the countess imperiously.

"I fear you will chide my presumption. The marquis talked nonsense, as he handed me to the carriage, and I overheard others doing the like; by declining his visit, I hoped to check this."

"There is no presumption in your idea; and no need for checking what you call nonsense," observed the countess with a smile of satisfaction. The marquis's wishes are sanctioned by me and his mother."

"I am sorry to hear this; and shall feel much obliged if you will inform his lordship that he can never be more to me than he is at present. The sooner he understands this the better."

"Do you mean me to tell him that you will not become Marchioness of Haddingly?"

"Certainly."

"And what reason am I to assign?"

"The most polite and least painful which truth will admit of."

"What do you object to in him? Most young ladies think him perfect;—rich, handsome, pleasing, and good tempered."

"I believe him good tempered, and he can be very pleasant, when he forgets to be a coxcomb; but I doubt the stability of his principles, if his wavering opinions deserve that name; and our general tastes accord but ill."

"Doubt the stability of his principles! one would think it was some cynical old grandpapa discussing his lordship. This is for me to think of and not you. What girl troubles herself about the principles of a young and handsome marquis, willing to become her lover? And what should you know of his principles? Have you been inquiring into his private life? Very delicate, and very proper."

"I have made no inquiries, and heard no one speak of him but yourself. I judge him only by his conversation."

"Folly! Do you expect a young marquis to talk like an old bishop? Have you no other objection?"

"Yes, one that is insurmountable. I cannot love, and therefore will not marry him."

"And you tell me this as coolly as though you were only finding fault with a dress—or declining a briefless barrister—or some poor creature shorn of wealth and title," burst forth her ladyship, yielding to the wrath which she had before with difficulty repressed. "What has a countess—one highly born—to do with love. Leave that to the vulgar and the low; she should choose as befits her station. Let me hear no more of this folly! You marry the Marquis of Haddingly."

"I am sorry to oppose you; but I cannot become the Marchioness of Haddingly."

Lady Ermiston could not see her grandmother's look at this firm reply, and if she spoke, her words were lost in the opening of the carriage door, and the letting down the steps; but her hope of escaping further contention was disappointed, for Lady Mexington, instead of returning her good night, resumed the conversation as soon as they were alone in the drawing room.

"You should know enough of me to understand that I will not be thwarted with impunity. Your rank is not as secure as you imagine, and were I to throw you off, you might find it impossible to establish your claims. Have a care lest I send you back to the obscurity from which I called you.—Receive the marquis as your future husband."

Katharine was silent for some moments. There was

that in the look and tone of the countess which might well have daunted a timid girl ; but receive the marquis as a lover she would not ; and she thought it more honourable to state this frankly, though her cheek paled at the wrath she dreaded.

"I spoke the truth, madam, when I said that I was sorry to oppose your wishes, but I must not mislead you. I entreat you to urge me no further on this point ; to do so would pain me—but would be useless."

"Why useless?" demanded the countess, grasping her arm, and looking keenly into her face.

Katharine shrank from her rude touch, and her stern look.

"You shrink but you answer not. Silly girl ! do you think to blind and turn me ? Why useless ? Do you love another?—one beneath you, as your wretched mother did ? Take warning by her fate—she opposed me—but in vain !"

Katharine shrank no more ; she threw off the grasp on her arm, and the countess involuntarily drew back.

"Name not my mother, madam, if you would not have her daughter forget that she is your grandchild. I do take warning by her fate ;—and by her words. I know from her own lips the story of her sufferings ; a broken-hearted widow forced by you to take a vow she could not keep. I fear not the obscurity with which you threaten me ;—wo is wo, though it dwell in a gilded palace ; and the brow will ache beneath a coronet."

Before Lady Mexington had recovered from the surprise and wrath occasioned by her grandchild's boldness, Katharine had quitted the room, leaving the countess to reconcile herself as she best could to an opposition which she had not expected, and could ill brook. Had Katharine seen her ladyship's countenance as she sank into a chair, she might have trembled at her own temerity ; and had the countess seen her granddaughter's wan cheek, and heard her bitter weeping when alone in her chamber, stern as she was, she might have felt some pity.

CHAPTER IX.

What will he think?—and what to say—I cannot—cannot tell.
Spanish Ballad.

Lady Mexington not only knew how to work her purpose through bursts of passion, but was equally versed in all those petty arts of vexing, which are sometimes more effective than sudden rage, and for some days her granddaughter's temper was sorely tried. The countess talked at her, and of her; thwarted every wish without open contradiction, and encouraged the marquis, till convinced by Katharine's guarded coolness of the vanity of hoping to win her affections, he gave up the attempt, too proud to become an instrument in her ladyship's hands to compel a reluctant assent.

Katharine tried to bear all this thwarting with uncomplaining patience, and whilst she mourned her own occasional fretfulness, the countess marvelled at a gentleness so rarely ruffled, try it as she would, and either from pity, weariness, admiration, or some other inexplicable reason, relaxed her labours in tormenting. Perhaps she saw that Katharine's cheek grew paler day by day; that she paid less heed to what was passing round her; and feared to lose so fair a scion of her race who might yet increase its honours.

Her granddaughter did not inquire the cause of so welcome a change, glad to be spared those hourly persecutions from which she had none to shield her.

Herbert Eustace had never called; and once when she had met him he had not returned her bow, being perhaps too much engaged with the pretty girl to whom he was talking to observe it. Another time he had bowed coldly; but had made no attempt to join her. She had no one near her whom she could call a friend, and she was beginning to feel low and nervous, starting at every noise, and feeling no interest in any occupation. There was no love in her grandmother's nature, or what little there had been was centered in her son;—ambition was her idol.

The countess was more thwarting and trying than ever, for two or three days after the marquis's withdrawal of his suit; and then, as though the paroxysm was over, she suddenly resumed the manner which she had maintained before Katharine's obstinate refusal to become a marchioness; mingling with it more kindness than of old.

"You look pale, Katharine, from keeping so much within doors. We will drive in the park to-day, and call on Mrs. Morven in the way; thus showing our wish to be on friendly terms, as you desired."

Katharine coloured, either from the suddenness of the proposition, or a knowledge that her grandmother's keen eye was on her ; but readily assented, though conscious that she should feel embarrassed in a meeting with the mother—still more embarrassed in a meeting with the son. And she was doomed to both, for both were in the drawing room when they entered, and could not restrain a little show of surprise at the visit, though they welcomed the visitors with studied politeness.

Lady Mexington was unusually gracious, and the wondering Mrs. Morven followed her lead ; whilst Katharine, pleased with her grandmother's attention to her wishes, soon found herself, to her great surprise, conversing with Lord Ermiston with a gaiety and frankness which she had never anticipated. Once or twice there was a slight pause from an approach to dangerous subjects, when they unadvisedly deserted the neutral ground of wind and weather ; but the difficulty was

soon removed by a new wording, or a new subject, and neither were aware how long the visit had been prolonged, till the countess rose to depart, graciously accepting Lord Ermiston's arm to her carriage.

It certainly was a sunny day with her ladyship. Every one who met her said they had not seen her look so well for years, or found her so pleasant ;—no pride or ill humour, only the lofty bearing which some thought fitting to her rank. She used not a harsh word to any one, and absolutely kissed Katharine before going to a dinner party, telling her to join her early, and bring all her roses with her.

Katharine gazed at her as she departed in surprise ; said something about "after a tempest comes a calm," and then thought on other things. She had wished to spend the evening at home, but her grandmother would not hear of it ; and it was therefore arranged that she should join her early, before the rest of the evening guests had arrived, that she might be spared the entering a crowded room, where so many would be strangers ; but things will not always fall out as they should. Owing to some accidental circumstance, instead of being early, she was late, how late she did not know, from her thoughts being otherwise engaged, till she arrived at Lady Sturton's. Lord Ermiston was in the cloak room, and came forward on the instant, taking her shawl, and giving it to the attendant.

"You are late ; I had no idea that you were become so fashionable."

He spoke gaily, and she replied in the same tone :

"The servants must bear the praise, or the blame, whichever it may be—

'Sure it was none of I!'

On the contrary, I retain so much of my country awkwardness, that if I dared, I should send for Lady Mexington to protect me through the crowd."

"Will you allow me to be your protector ?" said his lordship eagerly, offering his arm as he spoke.

At Sallowfield he had rejected her as a wife—at Swansea he had even disowned her as an acquaintance—and now was her hand to rest on his arm, as it had done in those days when he had loved her? Involuntarily she drew back at the thought: then, distressed at his evident pain from her movement, she placed her arm within his. Some low words in an unsteady voice were his thanks for this proof of forgiveness; and before they had reached the top of the stairs he was again conversing gaily; but not as gaily did Katharine reply. As they passed through the ante-room occupied by those who sought cooler air than the saloon afforded, she caught looks and words which deepened the colour on her cheek: and her confusion was heightened to a painful excess when she heard the attendants announce in a stentorian voice, Lord and Lady Ermiston. Had she not felt the awkwardness of such an announcement at the first instant, the looks, the smiles, the whisperings of many, would have taught her to understand it. The ridicule of it was apparent to herself, that the two antagonists for the same title, once lovers, should enter arm-in-arm, and be announced as man and wife, was enough to make the most sober smile.

Poor Katharine was ready to sink with vexation and confusion, aware that all eyes, Herbert's among the number, were upon her; and losing all presence of mind, from the consciousness of general observation, and the idea of what Lord Ermiston himself might think, she clung for a moment to his arm without daring to look up, and then almost seized on that of Lady Sturton, much to the surprise of that lady, a cold, stately woman, whom she had seen but once before. A general buzz of remarks, and a but half-suppressed titter followed this sudden clinging to, and as sudden relinquishment of Lord Ermiston's arm; but how his sensitive mind had endured the ridicule she did not know, not having dared to glance towards him. When she found him by her side a short time after, she observed nothing but his usual easy elegance; and a something that reminded her slightly of by-gone hours.

The turning of Lady Sturton to welcome a fresh guest, brought Katharine close to Herbert. He took the hand which she held out to him, according to custom, but relinquished it instantly ;—made a cold reply to her rather formal inquiry touching his health, adding that he had never seen her looking better—she had a brilliant colour at the moment,—and then turned again to the young lady with whom he had been conversing —the pretty Mary Silverton, as Katharine learnt in the course of the evening.

Katharine Darrell and Herbert Eustace no longer stood in the same position as they had done at Farnley Lodge. That was certain !

"You find the heat too much for you, Lady Ermiston. Will you go with me into the inner room,—it is cooler there ?" said one of the innumerable cousins to whom she had been introduced, a kind-hearted woman, who thought from her paleness that she was in danger of fainting. The offer was thankfully accepted.

Lady Mexington and Mrs. Morven were standing together when the extraordinary announcement of Lord and Lady Ermiston caused both to turn towards the door. Mrs. Morven coloured with vexation, afraid that her haughty cousin might think she and her son had planned the *contre-tems ;* but when she ventured to glance at her ladyship, to her great surprise, instead of anger or contempt, she saw only a bland smile.

"A very handsome couple," observed Lady Mexington graciously.

"There are few to equal them," replied the wondering Mrs. Morven.

"It was rather an embarrassing announcement, considering the past ; and poor Katharine, unused to observation, cannot carry off a *contre-tems* as your son does ; his easy elegance is admirable, I wish there was no dispute between them."

"So do I, most sincerely ; for your granddaughter's conduct has excited our admiration—I may say won our regard and gratitude. I did not know her once, as I know her now, and regret the course I took ; but that

regret comes too late. My son cannot be expected to yield rank and wealth without a struggle, contrary to the advice of his lawyer, though he deplores the necessity of the contest even more than myself. It is very unpleasant, particularly between relations."

"It is, Mrs. Morven, and I feel it is so; and law is very expensive, and very slow; one may wear away one's life in expectation and win only ruin at last. It might have been better if the young people had chosen to settle the matter between themselves; but young people will have a way of their own—little punctilios of pride as to the first advance; and take no heed of hints even from those the most attached to them. I do not see, though, why we should not be friends; we, who can neither be Earl nor Countess of Ermiston."

Before half an hour had elapsed, Mrs. Morven and her son were engaged to dine at Lady Mexington's on the succeeding day; and the latter, as we have said, was again by Katharine's side, who talked with a gaiety and hurried manner which spoke of nervous excitement rather than quiet happiness.

"Oh, dear Lady Ermiston, I am so glad to see you! So rejoiced to find your many virtues rewarded! If my dear friend had but lived to see this day, how she would have gloried in her adopted child!" exclaimed Mrs. Banham, taking both her hands.

"Mrs. Arnold could not have loved me more than she did;—her's was not a heart given to wealth and withdrawn from poverty."

Mrs. Banham looked a little conscious, but called her daughters to her aid. Maria and Charlotte were warm in the extreme, notwithstanding Katharine's coolness; and Mrs. Banham urged her dear Lady Ermiston to spend a day with them; but this her dear Lady Ermiston declined, saying, with a quiet smile—"Suppose we defer it till my claim to wealth and title shall be fully established."

"I see you know the Banham's," remarked Lord Ermiston, when they had passed on.

"I have reason to know them; but we will not recur to the past."

"Oh, no! Would that I could blot its remembrance from your mind—at least, some part."

"Not so; the remembrance of the whole may be a salutary lesson for us both; from the past we must learn wisdom to guide us for the future," replied Katharine with a sigh; then entering on a new subject, she resumed her former gaiety.

"What are you laughing at, Hensworth?" asked Herbert Eustace.

"A ridiculous story of Fenton's which he insists on every one's receiving as truth, though beyond the bounds of possibility. He has lied from youth to age till he cannot distinguish the true from the false. He is very entertaining, but I should as soon believe an assertion of childlike innocence from the most dexterous thief in christendom as credit one of his stories."

"And yet you applauded him."

"To be sure; he is a most amusing fellow—and who would not laugh when they can? That is my philosophy. You should be the last person to say anything against him, you who were once famous for your own good stories."

"You hear," said a gentleman just behind the speakers, "such might you have been—a liar in your youth—a liar in your old age, (I always give things their right name,) but that, losing your fortune, you lost your applauders; and a good story without good listeners is but an idle waste of words.—A laugh without an echo is a worthless nothing."

"Ha! Mr. Bell, is that you? I have not had a schooling from you for this many-a-day;" and Herbert shook the cynic's hand more cordially than he had ever done before.

"Schooling is thrown away, if the scholar will not learn," growled Mr. Bell in tones as hoarse as usual.

"Very true; I did not give much promise of doing your schooling honour then; but I hope I am improving now, since I have been employed in making a fortune for myself instead of amusement for others."

"You were forced to that;—study or starve became your only alternatives. I always said that poverty would do you good."

"True, sir, for which I did not thank you."

"People are never thankful for being told the truth."

"Not often, I admit; but then a bare, harsh truth puts me in mind of a staring, new, red, brick house; it may be valuable—but it shocks one's taste—revolts one's love for the beautiful. Plant round it—adorn it with roses and jasmines — embower it in beauty and fragrance, and it will be just as useful, and far more attractive: those who formerly beheld it with disgust will then look on it with admiration."

"Yes, laud the frippery, and think not of the substantial. Those very adornments which attract the wondering gaze of folly, in time smother and destroy that which they pretend to beautify. Psha! young man; you have profited little by the lessons of adversity."

"Nay, sir, I will give you a solid proof of my improvement. I have been a whole evening in the same room with Mr. Bampton without attempting to mystify him, or declaring that the laying hold of my button was unjustifiable, unwarrantable, and indefensible."

"What merit in a jest, when none would applaud it?"

"You are hard on me, sir; but now for the crowning proof of my amendment. I have met Mr. Bell, the cynic, who never yet said a word in my favour, not only without any resentment for his unmerciful strictures, but with real gratitude for his advice and warnings, though I still maintain that advice and warnings will be more effective when clothed in the most pleasing form. Needlessly to wound a man's self-love, is not the way to lure him on to good—it retards his course; for who travels easily along even a flowery path, who has a galling wound unhealed? With all our boasted reason, we men are like turkies; you may lead us with a scarlet rag—you cannot drive us with the whip."

Despite his cynicism, Mr. Bell could not help being touched by the young man's frankness; and amused by his whimsical illustration.

"This does look a little better; but you are like the herd whose folly you perceive, yet imitate. Why not go the right road, when you admit it to be such, whether the scarlet rag be held before, or the whip behind?"

"This is human nature! the pride and stubbornness of our wills, that to prove our free agency, would rush down a precipice rather than submit to a withdrawing arm. You must make man other than he is before you can accomplish this; the very best are little better than the slaves of their own passions. Low minds will kneel before their earthly idol wealth; — the more elevated bend to power or intellect. It would be hard to say what the human heart will not bow down before and worship; it hath made idols of its own works from the golden calf of Aaron's day to the bubble fame of ours."

"Do you mean what you say, young man?" asked Mr. Bell with a searching look.

Herbert coloured.

"You are severe, sir; but I have no right to complain that you should doubt the gravity of one whose words were, at one time, a never-ending jest. Should I ever have children, before they can talk they shall repeat the fable of the 'Boy and the Wolf,'" added Eustace laughing.

Herbert was hurt; and Mr. Bell saw that he was, though he tried to laugh it off.

"One question. Would you be Sir Herbert Eustace if the choice were yours?"

"You probe deeply, Mr. Bell, and I fear with no kindly meaning; you would rather wound than heal. Why ask if I differ from the herd to which you likened me? Why question when you would not credit; or would scoff at my reply?

"I repeat the question. Would you be Sir Herbert Eustace? Dare you answer this with truth?"

"With truth, or not at all. I will not say that I know the depths of my own heart, for each hour shows me more of my own ignorance; and that choice would be a sore temptation. I hope the loss of fortune has

been to me a real blessing, though grievous at the time; yet the trial would be great, for I love Eustace Park—the home of my happy childhood—the scene of a father's care:—I love every tree and shrub, ay, even every blade of the green grass; and wealth and title might procure me my heart's desire, though I fear it would come too late; but if I know myself I would reject Eustace Park, and wealth and title, had I the choice, if I must be precisely the same Herbert Eustace of my prosperous days."

"Herbert Eustace I respect you! and that is not what Philip Bell says lightly, or to many. And yet you are no wiser than your neighbours. There are flowers beside you, and you will not wear them, because they grow in a tangled brake, and you might scratch your fingers in the gathering."

"I do not understand you, sir," said Herbert, though a look of consciousness, as his eyes followed the direction of Mr. Bell's, and rested for an instant on the animated Katharine, betrayed some suspicion of superior knowledge.

"Then you are dull of comprehension by will—or by nature: I leave you to determine which. Look at Katharine Darrell, for I don't like her new name, and would not weight her open brow with a coronet; she should only have nature's richest gems wreathed in with her bright curls; lovely flowers coloured by the sunbeams, nourished and scented by the diamond dew. You see I can talk nonsense as well as a young coxcomb, Look at her! what is she like?"

"Like? oh! like those very flowers with which you would deck her; coloured by the sunbeam, nourished by the dew—of love and admiration, I conclude. All light, and life, and happiness! But she does not despise the coronet of which you would deprive her; and will wear precious gems, if but to show how much she can outshine them. The diamond would be dim beside that glancing eye."

"You are, indeed, no wiser than your fellows, Herbert Eustace; and the next time you waste your rhapsodies

on me, let them be spoken in a less bitter tone. All light, and life—and happiness! There is darkness in her heart! there is death upon her cheek! and happiness is far away. Go to man!—is the wild sparkling of that eye,—its restless light—the light of happiness?—That laugh,—all music though it be—is it the laugh of joy? that hectic flushing, does it speak of peace? She happy! See her when none else are by; that cheek will have grown wan—that bright eye dim—and that gay laugh be hushed:—I hate the light—it does not suit her. There is a lovely calm in happiness which she has not. You have said all have their idols!—look to yourself—is not yours pride?"

"What can you mean?" asked Herbert eagerly.

"I am no lexicographer, Mr. Eustace, to furnish meanings for my own words. No wonder that he who cannot read his letters should not be able to put them together to form words. If people will not see what they might see, I am not bound to give them eyes; if people will make themselves miserable, I am not forced to make them happy;" and refusing to be detained, but with a muttered "follow," Mr. Bell walked up to Katharine, shaking hands with her, after making a very formal bow to Lord Ermiston, who by no means thanked him for interrupting his further *tête-à-tête* with his fair cousin, whom he had never found more lively and fascinating.

"It is a long time since we have met, and strange things have come to pass in the meanwhile, Miss Darrell, for I don't like your other grand name, and I hope you will never be Lady Ermiston;—it would not suit you—I always said so."

Katharine's gaiety was gone in a moment; she looked down—a tear stood on her long lashes, and her fingers played unconsciously with a flower which she had just been admiring. Even Mr. Bell was at a loss to know whether her emotion arose merely from the remembrance of the death of Mrs. Arnold, and her subsequent sufferings; or was occasioned by the last part of his sentence.

"Have you been very happy since you came to town?" he continued, looking keenly at her.

The playing fingers pulled off the head of the rose;—she stooped to pick it up—then answered gaily.

"How can it be otherwise? You always said that a first visit to town was enough to turn the head of any woman under forty."

"And I said truly, for you are not the Katharine Darrell I once knew; you are no longer a playful child, without deceit or guile; you are a woman—a real woman—a London woman! looking one thing and feeling another. Your very gaiety is town gaiety;—not natural, but forced; not the spontaneous product of the heart's rich soil, but a sickly exotic compelled into flower for a night, to be admired for an hour;—that past—it fades, and dies—and is no longer seen. I liked you better as you were."

"How very rude! you really must take lessons in flattery, Mr. Bell," replied Katharine, trying to laugh off her embarrassment.

"He must at least defer putting them in practice till another time, as your cousin, whom we are to set down, is waiting," observed Lady Mexington, bowing to Mr. Bell.

Katharine rose with alacrity; wished Mr. Bell good night; and took Lord Ermiston's offered arm.

"Mrs. Morven and her son dine with us to-morrow, will you join the party, Mr. Eustace? I hope matters will be arranged without a law-suit," whispered Lady Mexington, glancing at her granddaughter and Lord Ermiston, who was paying Katharine a thousand little cares.

Gracious as was the invitation, Herbert declined it on the plea of business; remarking that his presence could not be required to facilitate the arrangement.

"Not in the least; only as Lady Ermiston's friend, you would of course rejoice in all being settled amicably."

Herbert bowed, and her ladyship passed on.

"Take care! deceit is a dangerous path to tread; and

coquetry leads to guile and sorrow. The inexperienced become entangled in webs of their own weaving, and fall a prey to more skilful fowlers. Why must the lip laugh whilst the heart is breaking?"

Katharine started at the whispered words, low, but distinct. Mr. Bell was beside her speaking more kindly than was his wont.

"Why should you think?" she began, but a movement among the crowd parted them at the instant, and she saw him no more.

Lady Mexington was in wonderful good temper and good spirits; she made no remark on the awkward announcement, neither did Katharine. "Mrs. Morven and her son dine here to-morrow," she observed as they were separating for the night, "and I asked Mr. Eustace to meet them, but he declined, muttering something about business. So you see I am willing to please you in all things, and am not quite the tyrant you believe me but a short time since; I was annoyed at your conduct then, I must admit. Mrs. Morven seems inclined to receive our friendly advances in a friendly spirit; and we should meet her more than half way."

"Certainly; and I thank you most sincerely for consulting my wishes, having much at heart the absence of all enmity between us. Do you not think that putting the papers into the hands of some other solicitor would facilitate this? Mr. Watson is said to resent Lord Ermiston's having employed some other adviser soon after his accession to the title; and to tell the truth, I do not like Mr. Watson's manner; he does not give me the idea of being an honest man."

"It is better for you that the papers should remain where they are," observed Lady Mexington with an expression of countenance so peculiar that Katharine could not withdraw her gaze, though unable to interpret it.—"Good night," added her ladyship, ending the discussion by leaving the room.

CHAPTER X.

The desolater, desolate!
The victor, overthrown!
The arbiter of other's fate—
A suppliant for his own?—
BYRON.

LORD ERMISTON came the next day, and the next, and the next, for more than a week, encouraged by Lady Mexington's gracious manner, and Katharine's friendly welcome ; yet Katharine was not what she had been at Lady Sturton's. The animation, the brilliancy which had excited so much admiration then, was no longer observable—the hectic flush was gone—the gay laugh hushed,—and her smiles were rare and scarcely natural; but then she was enduring a severe cold ; and that, besides being a destroyer of beauty, occasions a low, wretched feel, and a disinclination to all exertion ; so Lady Ermiston lay on the sofa, or sat in the easy chair, whilst Lord Ermiston read and talked to her, or looked at her, just as it might be, in a proper, cousin-like manner, as Katharine thought ; what Lady Mexington and Mrs. Morven thought of his manner was another matter.

"Have you finished that book, sweet cousin ?" asked his lordship, after all proper inquiries concerning her cold, and congratulations on its amendment.

"How could I? Have I not been studying law all the morning? Why there is as much fuss to prove me to be Katharine Morven that is, Katharine Darrell that

was, as though I had endeavoured to make myself out the lineal descendant of Alexander the Great, or the renowned Genghis Khan; and yet all this must be done before I can avail myself of dear Mrs. Arnold's gift. Oh, law! law! so dull—so prosy—so many words, meaning all the same thing, or nothing; whole sentences to be passed by, or forgotten, if one would comprehend the remainder. I never will engage in a law suit—of that I am determined."

"I am delighted to hear you say so!" exclaimed his lordship, approaching Katharine with looks expressing the delight of which he spoke.

"I forgot. I did not mean that, so you need not congratulate yourself on a victory," she replied, vexed at her own want of thought; and a little annoyed at his manner.

"Will nothing satisfy you but a battle to decide our claims? Would that they might be arranged more peaceably!"

"You cannot wish this more sincerely, or half as warmly as myself. I have ever been reluctant to pursue my claims, feeling that the loss must naturally bring more pain to you than can the gain bring joy to me; but I understood that you were averse to an amicable arrangement,"

"Do not believe this! there is nothing I desire more ardently."

"Indeed! I am delighted; for I dread the uncertainty of law—its long delays, and longer details, more than I used to dread Mr. Bampton's long stories. Suppose we settle the dispute at once, then. Each shall name an arbiter who shall decide, after seeing all the documents; we, of course, agreeing to abide by their decision. Should they disagree, we will decide it by the common game of pitch-and-toss, I think they call it; the one who loses the estates and title receiving all that would have gone for law expenses; and so we shall outwit the lawyers."

Lord Ermiston could not forbear a smile at her whim-

sical proposition, though that proposition was not exactly to his taste.

"Why should we not decide the point, fair Katharine, by a still shorter mode?"

"Oh, fie! my lord; wanting me to play at pitch-and-toss for an earldom, without the previous intervention of arbiters to excuse it. What would grandmamma say? You presume on my ignorance of the game, which I admit? so I shall not play till I have taken lessons."

"I have no desire that you should play at pitch-and-toss," replied his lordship rather gravely; for, fascinating as would have been her gaiety at any other time, it did not agree with his present mood.

"Then how would you settle it? I thought you had as great a horror of a suit in the Court of Chancery as myself."

"Perhaps greater, but why not end dispute by a suit in the court of love? Give me but your heart, dear Katharine, and I will receive the title at your hands, prizing it the more as the gift of your affection." He paused for her reply, watching her changing colour and increasing agitation.

"You pain me, my lord; I did not—I could not expect this. After what passed between us—I could not imagine—"

"That I should presume to address you thus," he exclaimed, concluding her sentence. "I cannot wonder at your saying this—I deserve it;—I hate, I despise myself for my selfish pride. Let me seek to atone for it—"

"There needs no atonement, it has long since been forgiven," she said, interrupting him.

"And forgotten? say that too, dearest and best! Say that you have forgiven all that I did unworthy of your matchless self. Do what no other could, forget my errors and reward my love!—a love that pride could never vanquish, for I loved you though I left you; have loved—must love you ever. Speak, dear Katharine, though but one word;—or may I read your silence as I wish?"

"No. No. You ask what I cannot grant—what you should not have expected"

"You said you had forgiven—"

"I have forgiven;—but I have also ceased to love."

Lord Ermiston spoke not:—he stood before her pale and agitated, her words, "I have also ceased to love" still ringing in his ears—the death knell of his hopes; and Katharine bowed her head, scarcely less moved. His manner had recalled the past so strongly to her mind;—their mutual vows—the love of her early youth, that she felt like a guilty thing, and dared not meet his eye;—her love had passed away—his lingered still! She forgot for the time how he had once renounced that love.

A loud, double knock threatened fresh visitors. Lord Ermiston looked on Katharine, and then rushed from the room by one door, as the servants announced the guests at the other, whilst his cousin did the honours of the house with as much composure as she could command.

"What is the meaning of this?" asked Lady Mexington the next morning, giving a note to Katharine, who coloured as she recognized the writing of her cousin; yet there was no cause for emotion, as the note contained nothing more important than an excuse for not dining with them as he had engaged to do. "Why, does not Lord Ermiston dine here to-day?" inquired the countess, looking inquisitively at her granddaughter.

"His lordship is obliged to leave town."

"I learn that from the note; but I ask of you—why he is obliged to leave town?"

"I am not answerable for his lordship's movements; he said nothing of his departure yesterday."

"Take care! I am not to be trifled with."

Katharine trembled at the warning, but made no reply.

"Lord Ermiston has been here every day, almost all day, for more than a week; he was here yesterday—went away abruptly—passed me without a bow, and

to-day sends a cold excuse for not dining with us ; yet you say that you are not answerable for his movements. I ask you again why he does not dine here to-day ?"

"I wish there were no such creatures as men ! they bring me nothing but wo and trouble," thought poor Katharine in her fear and vexation, foreseeing from her Ladyship's manner a second edition of her former persecution.

"Still silent ! Is this from fear, regret, or obstinacy? Give me a plain answer to one simple question. Has Lord Ermiston made an offer, and have you refused him ? Speak, girl !"

"Your suspicion, I am grieved to say, is correct. I had no idea after what had passed in former days that he could ever again entertain such hopes."

Her ladyship's lip curled in scorn.

"Do you mean to say that you have seen him sit by your side, day after day, thinking only of you, without guessing that he would play the lover ?"

"I did, indeed."

"Then you must be little short of an idiot. But what could induce you to refuse him when he did make the offer ? You cannot tell me as you did before—'I do not love him !'"

"That is the simple truth : I do not love him," said Katharine in a faltering tone.

"Not love him ! Whence your embarrassment at your first meeting ? your confusion when announced as man and wife ? your flirting with him the whole evening ? your anxiety to be on friendly terms ?—your ever-ready welcome ? your blushes when you named him ? Think of this, and tell me, if you dare, that you do not love him."

"I do not love him ; all this was caused by the remembrance of the past, the awkwardness of the present ;—unpractised in the world, I cannot hide what I would fain conceal."

The countess looked as if she would look her through, growing the sterner as the trembling girl turned from her keen gaze.

"You loved not Lord Haddingly—you love not Lord Ermiston—whom do you love?"

Katharine was silent, till her ladyship, repeating the question, she replied in some confusion, "I will wed none!"

The countess laughed a scornful laugh.

"Look in that glass! Now tell me with that face and figure, with youth, and rank, and fortune, that you will wed with none. Think you that I am grown blind and deaf? You will marry—marry within the year—marry as I please—you shall not wed beneath you. I spare you—I ask no questions;—in return, I expect obedience. I shall see Lord Ermiston, and explain your refusal as arising from timidity; a little pique—a womanly desire of revenge, and some slight misunderstanding. Let your conduct accord with this explanation; and well for you if I make not this concession in vain."

Lady Mexington would have left the room, but Katharine, gathering courage, sprang forward and detained her.

"Make no concession! offer no explanation!—I entreat—I implore you. I cannot—I will not be his bride."

"What means this obstinacy? Would you have me lay my curse upon your head?"

"Oh, no!" gasped Katharine, clinging to her.

"I need not," said the countess, rather softened; "you will bring a curse on your own head without my speaking it. I thought the romantic never loved but once. For your own sake, I urge you again to receive Lord Ermiston as your future husband. I say not this without a reason;—yes?—or no?"

"No," said Katharine in a low but steady voice.

"Then your fate be on your own head," remarked the haughty countess, putting away her clinging grandchild. "Why should you urge me? But lately you forbade what you now press."

"You dare to ask the reasons of my conduct, Katharine Morven you shall hear them. Do you suppose

that I seek the good of Margaret Morven, or her son? Do you think that I would not beggar both had I the power? There has been enmity and rivalship between us from our birth—there will be enmity and rivalship between us till our death. Could I make you a countess, Edgar Morven should sue in vain;—but listen, stubborn girl;—you are not the Countess of Ermiston! —you are but Katharine Morven;—penniless, but for Mrs. Arnold's bounty."

"How is this? You said differently the other day," exclaimed Katharine in surprise.

"Oh! you must have reasons, must you?—hear the why and wherefore? My word alone will not suffice. You shall be indulged; a pity that I cannot speak in legal terms. The point in dispute, as I told you before, is whether the title descends in the female line. There has been but one instance of a woman succeeding, and the point at issue is whether the grant by which she succeeded was limited to herself and daughters, or extended to all future female heirs. We maintain the latter—Lord Ermiston the former. He cannot produce the original grant; it is mislaid, or was destroyed, they say, in a fire some years back; but general opinion is on his side—the late earl the same; yet the only deed in which that original grant is referred to is in our favour. If Lord Ermiston cannot produce the grant, we can;—but will not. It is in the hands of Mr. Watson, who retained it accidentally, unconscious at the time of its value when called on by his lordship to return the other papers; and you may go and see it if you doubt me. The grant to female heirs was limited to the Lady Margaret and her daughters; so you are only Katharine Morven. Mine was no idle threat, you see; become Lady Ermiston by marriage, or return to the obscurity from whence you came. Watson's ill will to Lord Ermiston, and his good will to me, counting on my liberality, insures his not producing the document but at my desire; and it is my pleasure that it shall not be produced till after the marriage. You now see the folly of proposing to withdraw your confidence from

Mr. Watson; on keeping friends with him rests your only chance of being a countess."

"Do I understand you, madam? Is it possible that you can be a party to such a fraud? Can you believe that I would consent to such dishonour? Well might I think Mr. Watson no honest man."

Lady Mexington cowered beneath Katharine's indignant questioning; but rallied on the instant.

I have done what I could to advance the honour of my family."

"Rather to bring a stain upon it, madam; the virtuous mind would be shocked to win a title gained by fraud; I resign my claims on the instant."

"Stop, Katharine, I command you! Stop, if you would not drive me mad—if you would not have me hate you. What am I that I should listen to a girl's lecture on morality? or heed the whining of a silly child? Hear! be silent! and obey! Ermiston loves you with such love as even your romance need not despise;—he will gladly share his title with you, and believe your late refusal only maidenly coquetry. Consent to become his wife, or leave my house for ever. To-day I spend at Richmond with my son; to-morrow let me find you all dutiful obedience. Speak not! I will hear nothing! I am not to be turned or schooled by a mere baby. Splendour, or obscurity? make your choice, and look that it be a wise one; I will not hear that decision till to-morrow."

Lady Mexington left the room, and Katharine sank into a chair, pale, faint, and trembling; her haughty grandmother had left the house some time before she had recovered from the shock, and decided on her future course. That her nearest relative should be guilty of such dishonourable deception;—that she should have been, though unintentionally, a sharer in the crime! and that this wrong should have been done to Lord Ermiston! Would he, would others believe that she had been an innocent tool? She was loath to reveal her grandmother's guilt to clear herself. There was but one course to pursue;—frank and straightforward as she had

always been she had neither the will nor the wit to tread in crooked paths.

Lady Mexington's pride had induced her to insist on her granddaughter's keeping a separate establishment of servants and carriages; and Katharine was soon on her way to Mr. Watson, who was fortunately at home.

"I understand from Lady Mexington that you have the grant made to my ancestress, by which the descent in the female line is limited to the Lady Margaret Morven and her daughters," said Katharine abruptly, when the compliments of the morning had passed between them. "Am I correct?"

Mr. Watson looked surprised, but after some hesitation answered in the affirmative.

"And you consider that this grant, or whatever I ought to term it, destroys my claim to be Countess of Ermiston?"

"Certainly! my lady, were it in the possession of the opposite party;—but I have so arranged with your noble grandmother that it never shall be in their possession. I am surprised at Lady Mexington's having annoyed your ladyship with the information; but trust we shall win our cause and humble Lord Ermiston, whose pride is intolerable;—or at all events, make a good bargain."

"Will you be kind enough to show me the deed, Mr. Watson?" said Katharine, making no comment on his remarks.

"Really, Lady Ermiston, for such I hope to see you, this is rather a singular request for a young lady. Deeds are but dry discourses to your lovely sex; and though we naturally in your presence drop technicalities, we find it difficult to make our meaning understood."

"I have Lady Mexington's sanction for the request," remarked Katharine coldly, disgusted with his fawning manner.

Mr. Watson still hesitated, unable to divine her purpose; but there was so much decision in her look and tone that he thought it better to comply, considering,

whilst searching for the paper, how this very compliance might be turned to his advantage.

Katharine held out her hand for the deed; but the wily lawyer drew back.

"Your pardon, Lady Ermiston; but this is too precious a document to leave my possession."

"As you please, Mr. Watson; I have no intention of destroying it."

"Of course not, my lady," he replied, confused at her emphatic I, and indignant glance.

"You will not object to read it to me?"

"You already understand its meaning; and will find it so very dull."

"I can bear dulness; read it if you please—every word;" and seating herself beside him at the table, she prepared by following his reading to be quite certain that not a word was omitted.

"What can the girl mean?" thought Mr. Watson; but the decided manner of that girl again enforced compliance.

The lawyer read the whole, only occasionally interrupted by Katharine, who requested an explanation of all that she did not understand.

"You see, Lady Ermiston, it is as I told you; the gallantry of the monarch to your bewitching sex was individual rather than general."

"I understand that I have not the slightest claim to be Countess of Ermiston. Good morning! I am obliged to you for the trouble you have taken," said Katharine, bowing coldly as she rose to depart.

Mr. Watson was puzzled.

"Excuse me, Lady Ermiston, but—"

"Miss Morven, if you please, sir."

Mr. Watson's look became still more troubled.

"Miss Morven then, since you will have it so. Excuse me if I ask, as Lady Mexington has named this document, whether I am to consider you as acquainted with, and a party to, our agreement—that is, arrangement concerning it!"

"I am neither acquainted with, nor a party to, any

agreement or arrangement concerning that document, Mr. Watson. You shall hear from me to-morrow."

She had entered the carriage before the lawyer had sufficiently recovered from his surprise to offer his attendance.

In a few minutes more Katharine was seated in Mrs. Carter's quiet parlour; relating enough of her embarrassment to account for her own conduct, without exposing Lady Mexington.

Mrs. Carter was vexed, very vexed that her dear Miss Katharine was not to be a countess after all; but half got over the vexation in her pleasure at finding that her opportune visit to a town relation had enabled her to be of service to her favourite, to say nothing that her favourite had applied to her, instead of to her grand connections; to these Kate must have more fully explained the conduct of her grandmother.

Early the next morning Katharine and Mrs. Carter were on their way to Farnley Lodge; and when the Countess of Mexington returned from Richmond a note from her grandchild was put into her hands, which occasioned one of those sudden bursts of fury to which her ladyship was subject; yet the note, though short, was perfectly respectful, and showed the writer's wish to make no disclosure, but what circumstances might compel.

[To the Countess of Mexington.]

"My dear Madam,

"The inclosed copies of notes sent to Lord Ermiston, and Mr. Watson, will show my decision on the subject of our yesterday's conversation. Any further explanations that may be necessary I leave to your ladyship and my late solicitor. Unable to comply with your wishes, I quit your house in obedience to your commands; and return to my friend Mrs. Colvin, accompanied by Mrs. Carter. Before I conclude, allow me to thank you for the kindness received at your hands; and to express a hope that the time is not far

distant when, allowing the impossibility of my acting in the difficult situation in which I was placed, otherwise than I have, we may again meet with at least as kindly feelings as before. Wishing your ladyship every good, permit me still to sign myself,

"Your dutiful granddaughter,

"KATHARINE MORVEN."

The countess's eye ran hastily over the enclosed notes; and she drew her breath more freely when she had concluded their perusal.

[To R. Watson, Esq.]

"As Miss Morven, of course, abandons all further claim to the title of Ermiston (now that she knows that claim to be unjust) she must beg Mr. Watson will take no further step to establish what she once believed her rights; and cease to consider himself as any longer employed by her in a legal capacity."

[To the Earl of Ermiston.]

"MY LORD,

"Permit me to congratulate you on your right to the Earldom of Ermiston being fully established by a deed in the possession of Mr. Watson, of the existence of which I was totally ignorant till a few hours since. The right of a female to hold the title is expressly limited to Lady Margaret Morven and her daughters; and most deeply do I regret that, in ignorance of this fact, claims were made on my behalf, painful to you—and me. Pardon the unintentional wrong; and believe that no one can more sincerely wish you and Mrs. Morven every happiness, than

"Yours, truly,

"KATHARINE MORVEN."

If Lady Mexington was in a rage at her note, Mr. Watson was in a consternation at his ; and an immediate interview between the countess and her solicitor was the consequence ; in which, after having agreed in abuse of Katharine's folly, they likewise agreed to put the best face on the matter which circumstances would allow, and since the girl, with all her nonsense, had shown the courtesy not to reveal their dishonest purpose, they resolved on enacting the handsome towards Lord Ermiston, giving him to understand that the deed had only then and by mere accident been brought to light. Whether his lordship believed this matters not. Had the trouble and anxiety which these notes had cost poor Katharine been understood by those who received them, they might have been better satisfied with their contents, than she was herself.

CHAPTER XI.

"Dear Isabel,
I have a motion which imports your good,
Whereto if you'll a willing ear incline,
What's mine is yours, and what is yours is mine."
Measure for Measure.

"Oh! mamma, whose carriage is this?" asked Clara Colvin, looking from a window at Farnley Lodge.

"Indeed, child, I do not know; carriage and livery are strange; travellers, I conclude, by the post horses."

"Somebody kissing their hand; do look, papa; oh, it is Katharine! dear Katharine!" exclaimed the child, clapping her hands in extacy, jumping off her father's knee, and running to the door.

"Yes, it is Katharine!" said Mrs. Colvin.

"Yes, it is Katharine!" observed her quiet husband; and away went that delicate wife, and the quite husband, after the riotous child, to welcome the general favourite.

"Dear, dear Katharine!" exclaimed Clara, springing up and clinging round her neck to the danger of pulling her down.

"My dear Katharine, how glad we are to see you," said Mrs. Colvin. "Get away, you little monkey, you will choke the dear girl," releasing her visitor from Clara's hug.

"This is very kind, Katharine, I can assure you, we have missed you sadly," observed Mr. Colvin, shaking her warmly by the hand.

Katharine tried to speak her thanks for this friendly

welcome, but it would not do ; the lips quivered—the smile refused to come—the head sank on Mrs. Colvin's shoulder ; and she burst into tears. Scandal says that the whole party cried for sympathy ; but Mr. Colvin denies the fact, as far as he himself is concerned, with singular earnestness.

"This is very silly. I am quite ashamed of myself," said Katharine, blushing, smiling, crying, all together.

"Poor thing ! she has been worried," remarked Mrs. Carter in apology, quite forgeting to be formal.

"Don't cry, dear Katharine ; no one shall vex you here," said Clara, looking as tall and grand as possible, and pressing closer to her side.

"Yes ; yes ; we will take good care of you," said Mr. and Mrs. Colvin in a breath. "You are come to stay with us, we hope?"

"If you do not turn me out, for I have no other home," replied Katharine sadly.

"No fear ; we should never all three agree to that, depend upon it, if one did ; so you are quite secure."

"I do not think that Katharine is looking either well or happy," remarked Mrs. Colvin to her husband, two days after their favourite's return.

"I do not think she is," replied her husband quietly.

"I hope she is not fretting at losing the title ; it was provoking after having had a hope of it," continued his wife.

"I do not think Katharine cares one pin about the title ; at least, just at present ; and that is saying much, for you ladies do like gew-gaws. I rather think she is glad to be so handsomely quit of a distasteful lover and tyrannical grandmother."

"Then what does blanch her cheek ?"

"Perhaps not having followed my advice, but taking things for granted, instead of asking questions till all was clearly understood."

"I am sure, Charles, you know something."

"I do, my dear,—that you are very curious."

"Now do not be tiresome, Charles ; tell me if you know anything."

"I know nothing."

"But you guess something."

"Yes; you and I guess a great deal, do we not, Mrs. Carter?"

"I think we do, sir," she replied, trying to look arch, an attempt which suited most ludicrously ill with her very demure features.

"Who thought of seeing you, Herbert!" exclaimed Mrs. Colvin, rising to receive her visitor, who had entered unannounced.

"Where is Katharine?—Miss Darrell?—Miss Morven?—I mean," asked her cousin eagerly, having ascertained that she was not in the room.

"In the library with Clara, I believe. But what is the meaning of all this? Here is Katharine comes in haste without a word of notice, telling a story, which though clear as far as it goes, would I suspect be more complete with an appendix; and the third day after comes down Herbert Eustace in equal haste, asking for Katharine the first thing, as though fearing that she had been devoured, and looking as if he had travelled all night!"

"You are right there."

"And pray what may be the meaning of all this railroad velocity? Has Miss Morven run away from her guardian; and has her guardian run after her?"

"Exactly so, most sagacious cousin!" replied Herbert with an embarrassed laugh.

"No wonder, when you never called to look after her; I should have run away myself."

"What do you mean? I called on her several times, but was always denied admittance."

She tells a very different story; but here she comes, and we will have the mystery cleared up at once. Come into court, Katharine Morven, and make answer to the charges brought against you by your guardian."

Herbert advanced eagerly to Katharine, who, scarcely touching his offered hand, and slightly answering his inquiries, passed on to Mrs. Colvin with a heightened colour whilst Mr. Eustace, hurt at her coldness, shook

hands with Clara and his host, who entered at the moment.

"Now, Katharine, summon all your eloquence to meet Herbert's charges; I see you tremble at the thought," said Mrs. Colvin.

"Pardon me; Mr. Eustace can bring no serious charge, and to a jesting one, an aching head must excuse my pleading."

"No, you shall not escape so easily; but we will grant the accused a chair," said Mr. Colvin, who saw that Katharine's trembling was no jest, "It is my commonplace plan to have everything explained; and I am convinced that if all acted in this way there would be fewer sighs and more smiles. Now, Herbert, make your charge."

"Pardon me; I do not presume to make any charge against Miss Morven."

"Well! Well! Well! here is an exemplification of the negro proverb—'Trouble neber make heself,'" observed Mr. Colvin, shrugging his shoulders. "You two will continue to look askance at each other for the next ten days, if I do not turn you out of the house before, because you have both a fancy to ride the high horse; but I have a fancy too, so Mary do you state the case, as opening counsel, and I will commit the prisoners if they refuse to plead. Only do not be long about it; for the bailiff is waiting for me to look at some oats. Male counsel consider themselves privileged to repeat things six times over; but you, being a woman, and therefore averse to talking, will content yourself with stating the particulars once. No laughing, or striking in court," he added, stooping to avoid his wife's threatening hand. "Now, Mary!"

"Very well! but your punishment is only deferred. To state the subject briefly, Katharine Morven says that Herbert Eustace never called on her except the morning after her arrival in town, and scarcely spoke when they met by chance; whilst Herbert Eustace asserts that he called several times, but the said Katharine Morven always chose to be denied."

"I certainly called three times," said Herbert.

"I never heard of your calling, and therefore could not have been denied," said Katharine.

"Heyday, prisoners! I hope I shall not have to commit you both for perjury. How often did you call, Herbert Eustace?"

"I called three times; the first, the day after my return to town; and each time persisted in sending up my card, saying that I was sure Lady Ermiston would see me; and each time did the servant return with the answer that Lady Ermiston was particularly engaged."

"What say you to this, Katharine?"

"That the cards were never brought to me—that the messages were not of my sending," answered Katharine frankly.

"Who could have done this?"

"Lady Mexington, I have little doubt."

"Is it possible she could?"

"We will not discuss the possibility of what she could, or what she could not do," interrupted Katharine.

"Not guilty! on that charge; but what say you, Herbert Eustace, to scarcely speaking to Katharine Morven, when you met by chance?"

"I plead guilty, and throw myself on Miss Morven's mercy," said Herbert colouring. "I was piqued at her refusing to admit me; and saw everything with a jaundiced eye."

"Since you throw yourself on her mercy the case is out of my jurisdiction, and she must award your punishment. Why not have asked her the reason for being denied? Here is a fresh proof of the wisdom of my rule to require explanations on all puzzling occurrences; and never to believe what you see, or give credit to what you hear, but on very strong evidence. Be you merciful to the delinquent, Katharine.—The court is dissolved; and I am off to the bailiff."

"What punishment do you award, Miss Morven? Humane judges take into consideration the previous sufferings of the criminal."

"I will be generous, and grant full forgiveness; I may not have been quite free from blame myself," said Katharine, looking down.

"This is more than I deserved—this is like yourself."

"I can guess as well as Mrs. Carter, and my quiet husband," thought Mrs. Colvin, as she heard his animated thanks to his fair judge, and marked her confusion whilst receiving them.

"I know of old, your antipathy to telling your thoughts, or I should petition to learn on what your mind had been employed for the last ten minutes," said Herbert Eustace to Katharine Morven, on the following day, joining her whilst sitting alone in the library.

"Why for the last ten minutes particularly ?"

"Because the expression of your features has been so various during that time."

"How can you tell ?"

"Because I have been watching you unseen, too insignificant to attract your attention by my entrance."

"I beg your pardon."

"I do not require it. Will you tell me your thoughts instead ?"

"Oh, no! it is such very bad taste to speak of one's self."

"What a severe speech! You must have divined that I was going to bore you with my autobiography."

"Were you ? Delightful!"

"You will listen, and give me your advice, then ?"

"Some other time ; Clara is waiting for me now," said Katharine rather hurriedly.

"No, now. The conclusion must rest with you ;—Clara can wait. I pass over my boyish years, all boys are so much alke, dirty, noisy, self-willed, and mischievous ; robbing orchards or bird's-nest ; learning everything but what they should ; torments to all around, yet, strange to say, tolerated, nay, even petted by those they tease the most."

"Admirable!" said Katharine. "Your autobiography will be perfectly original ; for you do not intend to

make yourself out a prodigy;—and you do intend to tell the truth. It will run through twenty editions at the least in its first form; and will then be sold in numbers, illustrated with a portrait of the author, to satisfy the still craving multitude."

"Oh, Miss Morven! is this your vaunted charity? I shall never have courage to proceed unless you promise to be more merciful."

"I was but lauding your originality. Go on; and I will endeavour to resemble the French gentleman who always looked as though he carried sugar in his pocket."

"I do mistrust you; but having once begun, like the phantom ship, I must on—on—till my race be run. I begin my history from the day I met you at Sallowfield."

"I pray you do not put me in your book, Mr. Eustace."

"I must; my history is to be the history of my feelings, and those you have controlled—compelled. At first, I looked upon you only as an engaging child, you were so young, so frank, so gay, the spell of happy childhood still upon you, but Ermiston's attentions, and your manner of receiving them, showed me that you were a woman, with a woman's feelings, and a woman's power; and I felt I loved at that very moment, when I also felt that I could not be beloved. I told my love, but in no winning way; it was rather the outpouring of jealousy, than the revealing of affections. It was my first act of unkindness towards you; I am sure it will be my last.

"It was no triumph to me that Ermiston yielded to his mother's pride, and his own sensitive fastidiousness. I was grieved for you—I was angry with him, that, having been preferred to me, he should prove himself unworthy of your regard; but the idea of renewing my suit, of seeking to succeed him in your affections, never once entered my mind. I was in no mood to be second to any; with a feeling common to our sex, I was resolved that however many fancies I might have myself, I would be, or at least believe myself to be, the first love of the lady of my choice.

"My cousin crossed my path in love—my uncle in ambition; I had neither land nor bride, and was compelled to exertion, so I set about making a fortune and forgeting Katharine Darrell. The first, through diligence and good connections, I was in a fair way of accomplishing—the last—I believed complete. Had I met you in a situation befiting you, I should only have admired; but I met you under circumstances which called forth my pity, which compelled me to become your protector. I did protect you, and you spoke of gratitude; but the tone was cold as the feeling, and you knew this yourself; you still loved Ermiston, and could scarcely pardon me for doing that which he should have done. I was piqued, and resolved you should understand that I was no longer your lover, only your friend; you did understand this, and I was satisfied. If I did not love, I could feel for you, and really had no very Christian feeling towards Mrs. Dixon. Clara's sudden dislike, and the consequent coolness of her parents made me more anxious for your comfort, as I had been the means of subjecting you to this fresh annoyance; and your gratitude for my exertions, and the sweetness with which you bore the disappointment, increased my esteem and admiration; but I did not love you:—I could be second to none; love may succeed indifference or dislike, but it cannot succeed itself, I said to my own heart—a feeling extinguished cannot be relumed,—you may extract fire from most things—but from ashes—never! of all this I had no doubt.

"I talked as your brother, your friend, your guardian; you looked upon me as I spoke of myself, always met me with unembarrassed warmth, with open pleasure; such were the terms I thought on which we should always meet.

"My leisure time was spent at Farnley Lodge, partly by my own choice, partly to render your abode more pleasant; and I advanced this latter plea to myself long after I saw you an acknowledged favourite. My professional income increased to an extent that I could not have anticipated;—I might without imprudence think

of selecting one to share my hopes and fears, and I found myself fancying a beloved companion by my side, listening, and replying to my words; and yet, by a strange timidity, I forbore to endow this vision with face or form. Circumstances prevented my usual visits to Farnley Lodge, and I began to get fretful and irritable. Mrs. Colvin wrote me word of Mr. Burnet's attentions, and I returned an unintelligible reply. I felt the impossibility of deferring my visit longer—I was sure Mr. Burnet was not a person to make you happy. I came—your first words were thanks, and I yielded to the spell which I could not resist. My fancy for a first love with all the forcible and original arguments against the reluming of a worn-out feeling were forgotten;—I pictured you sharing my hopes and fears, in short, I felt that I loved! I did not care whether it was a new feeling, or an old one renewed—I left that point to be decided by philosophers;—I loved!—that was sufficient!

"A slight confusion on your part made me think that my looks had betrayed my feelings, and that you were not displeased—I hoped not indifferent. I sought your society—you did not shun me, though you referred everything to gratitude; and I hoped more and more. My cousin had no suspicion of the truth, and urged me to plead for Mr. Burnet. I refused, but felt that he being as the world calls it a better match, I ought not to dissuade you, as my own prospects were still moderate. He was ever by your side, I thought by your desire, and I was inclined to blame you—to call you worldling and coquette. I fear I was not always very courteous; I could not control the expression of my disapprobation. Our conversation just before my departure partly banished my fears, and I went with a lightened heart, resolved to learn my fate on my return; but on that return you were no longer Katharine Darrell. You had no longer a mad mother, which I admit had always pained me, but were possessed of rank and wealth. What right had I to expect that you would bestow these on a poor barrister? It seemed selfish and dishonourable to ask

it, till I had the sanction of your titled relatives, who would be against me;—till mixing in the world you had learnt the value of your acquisitions. Contending feelings confused my explanation, and your emotion as I named Ermiston made me believe you still attached to him. I will not pain or weary you by a detail of my jealous tortures. Your promise that no manœuvres of your grandmother should prevent our meeting somewhat reassured me; but when taking leave of you in town I did so with a presentiment of evil.

"I called the day after my return, and was refused admittance;—you were at home, I heard, but would not see me. In the evening I saw you engrossed by the Marquis of Haddingly, Lady Mexington looking approbation, the whole room talking of his lordship's attentions, and your gracious reception of them. I watched every look and movement, though I did not approach. I saw that you were much interested in Lord Haddingly's conversation, but I also marked that you blushed and trembled as Ermiston stopped to disentangle his mother's dress, and spoke to him with an evidently friendly feeling. Did you love him still, or was it only the natural prompting of your noble spirit, to prove that the past was forgiven—was forgotten? Of his feelings I had no doubt. Again Lord Haddingly engaged your attention, but you looked up at my name, and spoke. I fancied a shade of coldness in your manner, and you made no remark on having been denied to me in the morning. I called the next day, and the next—receiving the same answer. What was I to think?

"I heard that Lord Haddingly had been rejected, that Lord Ermiston was preferred. Professional duties prevented a meeting for some days; when I saw you,—and I had been long watching for your coming,—you entered a crowded room on my cousin's arm, and you and he were announced as man and wife. The buzz and the titter told you the general opinion, yet you clung to his arm for an instant, ere you relinquished it abruptly; and allowed him to remain beside you the

whole evening, conversing with an animation, an abandonment to gaiety that I had rarely seen in your happiest days, and which increased your powers of attraction. All others saw that his lordship was *enivré d'amour*. Were you alone blinded to this; or was the knowledge not displeasing? Mr. Bell guessed my feelings, and declaring your gaiety to be assumed, bluntly urged me to seek an explanation. I was too proud—had you been Katharine Darrell still, I would have done so; but to the Countess of Ermiston I could not thus stoop; it was for you to explain why I was denied admission to your presence. I saw Lord Ermiston lead you to your carriage, whispering words that I could not hear; and I received an invitation from Lady Mexington to meet him on the morrow. She hoped all would be arranged without a trial, she said; and her look was significant and triumphant; she guessed my love, and rejoiced in my pain. Was it strange that I declined the invitation? By accident I learnt that Ermiston was with you day after day; I heard that he had been congratulated and had made no denial;—I could doubt no longer. I tried to despise you, to convict you of the most heartless coquetry; and immersed myself in business to forget you.

"Looking over some papers a note met my eye, which I had carelessly thrown aside on its arrival, without looking at the writing; it was from Mrs. Carter. I tore it open with a bitter feeling; it might name you, at least, it came from one who was attached to you. I learnt that you were not the Countess of Ermiston in your own right, that you would not become so in right of another—that you were on your way to Farnley Lodge.

"Then you were no coquette! How I raved at my own pride and folly! How I vexed myself at the time which that note had been left unread! I quitted London the first moment that in justice to others I could claim as my own, resolved to know my fate. You met me coldly, but that coldness has passed away.. —May I not hope for ever? I have bared my heart

before you—it is yours! Do you deem it worthy your acceptance? I have not much to offer in the way of wealth, and yet enough for my own moderate wishes will you but share it.—And you—you, who have rejected wealth and rank, cannot be ambitious. How is my autobiography to end? With you rests its conclusion."

"Better break it off abruptly; it will be the more original," said Katharine, bending over her book.

Herbert turned pale, and his voice faltered.

"You are too frank, too generous, to trifle. Are my hopes vain? You are silent—you turn away. Are my words hateful? Oh! Katharine, must I love a second time—and be a second time rejected?"

Her changing cheek showed her not unmoved, and it seemed as if she were struggling to reply with calmness.

"Lord Ermiston's compliments, ma'am, and he begs to speak a few minutes with you alone on particular business," said a servant, entering at the moment.

"My compliments, and I will see his lordship immediately," replied Katharine after a moment's hesitation, without looking at Herbert, who drew back at her words, making no endeavour to stay her departure. She paused as she reached the door. "Pardon me; my absence will be brief."

Soft as were the tones they did not allay his jealousy.

"I entreat you to make neither haste nor excuse; I will wait your leisure—or to spare further trouble consider my autobiography concluded."

"You wrong me. Time has taught me to mistrust myself; and I would be quite assured ere I assure another," said Katharine, gently departing without waiting a reply.

Lord Ermiston was impatiently watching for her entrance, and advanced eagerly to meet her. There was strong feeling, amounting almost to impetuosity in his manner, such as she had never seen before.

"I am come to tell you the respect, the admiration, the love, with which your conduct has inspired me.

Under every circumstance how noble! how superior! I blush for myself. I know I deserve your contempt, and yet I cannot endure that you should despise me. I would yield all I have to banish from your memory our parting interview at Sallowfield—our meeting at Swansea. Oh! that I had not yielded to my mother's entreaties! How gladly would she now receive you as a daughter! I rushed from your presence, shocked, wounded, for I had believed myself beloved. I left town immediately, and thus received your note but yesterday. I could not before press my suit as I desired; you might have thought it only the love of gain, the wish to make a bargain;—now I can press my wishes boldly, fearlessly; with all the ardour of true love, dreading no misconception. You have resigned the title;—take it back!—receive it with the hand of one who loves, and who has ever loved you; his pride having vainly struggled for the mastery. Do not bid me despair!"

"It cannot be! do not ask it—" said Katharine gently, touched by his emotion, but unwavering in her decision.

"Why can it not be? Will you never forgive, forget my cowardice?—for it was cowardice, the mean fear of the world's ridicule. Will no repentance wash away my crime? Will you forget my love, yet remember that desertion?"

"You do me—you do yourself wrong. I have long since forgiven all—but—"

"Stop, Katharine! do not say, as you said before, that you have also ceased to love. I could not bear it. You are touched by my pleading, you feel for my anguish. The tears are in your eyes; and your tones are soft and gentle. Give me time—send me not from you—bid me not despair—make not the title you restore me worthless in my eyes. Let me hope that my regard may hereafter win a return—that as I love, so may I be beloved."

"Impossible!" said Katharine, the tears falling as she spoke.

"Why impossible, dear Katharine? You said in

former days that you could love but once—and you did love me then."

"I did—but there was error in my words; I was young then, very young; and knew not what was in the human heart."

"You could never cease to love, if the object of your love proved not unworthy, were your words; and I have proved unworthy, you would say."

The sternest heart must have been moved by his despairing, self-condemning tone; and Kate was never stern;—her tears fell faster, yet she could not give him hope.

"Forgive me! I would not pain you—I meant not to say you were unworthy—my parentage might well excuse rejection; I would only say that you made it then my duty to forget."

"And you fulfilled that duty promptly—and with pleasure."

"Not promptly—and with much pain."

"But you have fulfilled it fully? Speak! say that there is not one thought of love remaining; that your embarrassment when we first met in town arose from the delicacy of generosity, not from the timidity of affection."

"I was pained and embarrassed at the idea of robbing you of your title."

He was silent for some moments, then spoke with a sort of desperate courage.

"You were ever candid;—do you love another?"

"Yes."

He gasped for breath—"and that other is—Herbert Eustace?"

"It is," said Katharine, blushing deeply.

He paced the room with hasty strides, then stopped abruptly.

"I crossed his wishes—now he has crossed mine. I flung away my happiness—he has secured it. There was enmity between us from our childhood; I wronged him in my younger days—I do him justice now. He is worthy of you; may you be happy! It will be long

before we meet again. Promise to regard me as a cousin, since more I cannot be; this is now all I ask, you will not refuse it?"

"Oh, no! I esteem—I regard you—would I could do more!"

"Heaven bless you for that wish! I have ill deserved such kindness. Farewell!" He pressed her hand to his lips, turned away with a look of agony, and rushed from the room.

Before Katharine was well aware of his departure, he had nearly reached the lodge.

When she re-entered the library, Herbert Eustace was leaning against the mantel-piece looking at something, or at nothing—most probably the latter. He half turned at her entrance, and then again looked steadily into the fire. Katharine paused a moment, and then advanced towards him with a changing cheek and timid step.

She stood beside him; but he neither moved nor spoke.

"Will you not forgive me?" she said very softly.

He started—looked upon her—then took the hand half held towards him, half withdrawn.

"And the heart, dear Katharine?"

"Is yours! I never doubted you, but I desired to be quite certain of myself; to be convinced that let Lord Ermiston be as generous as he might I could not feel towards him as I had felt in other days. I am now quite assured. Do you refuse to forgive?"

"Oh, Katharine, what a question," he exclaimed, interrupting her. "But I deserve it for my doubts. How you have shamed me!"

"Nay, you have shamed me, forcing me to offer you the hand you would not ask."

"I had asked for it before—sought it as the best blessing earth could yield. Nay, seek not to withdraw this hand, dear Katharine, you gave it me; and I will keep it. Can you forgive my churlishness?"

"I must, lest you should tell how forward I have been."

"You cannot think me so ungrateful! And I have seen no forwardness. But Ermiston, what did he say?"

The tears came into Kate's eyes, and she spoke with an earnestness which insured compliance.

"You must be friends with him—he deserves it. He says he judged you harshly in your younger days, but does you justice now. We have his wishes for our happiness;—his is a generous spirit, though a proud one; and he is not happy. You will be friends?"

"Yes, from this very moment. I understand, and from my heart I pity him; once I felt what he now feels, and thus can judge his suffering."

"Vastly pretty, Miss Morven! Two hours have I and Clara been waiting for our walk. Who is to bear the blame—you or Herbert?" asked Mrs. Colvin entering the library some time after.

"I will bear all the blame, sweet coz, and tell you a secret to appease your wrath."

"Secret for secret, Mr. Herbert. Miss Morven is to become Mrs. Eustace, and I shall salute her as my cousin without waiting your permission."

"How came you to be so penetrating?"

"Penetrating! why a blind mole could have seen it! Besides, my sober husband, and that very proper, demure Mrs. Carter, never meet without looking knowledge. If they have not been match-making I am no conjuror."

Herbert laughed, protesting that the very demure Mrs. Carter could never have even imagined such an enormity. "I know better; your demure people do ten times more mischief than your wild ones. But pray, Mr. Herbert Eustace, what is to prevent your being tried for bigamy? Clara has been your acknowledged wife these three years."

"I will provide her with another husband in due time."

"Or have Katharine and Clara both, I suppose, as the poor child herself proposed so innocently, to your utter confusion. What say you to this, Katharine.

"Why, I told Mr. Eustace to break off his autobiography abruptly, without a catastrophe; but he would

not take my advice; it will now be thoroughly commonplace—not worth the reading."

"Yes," remarked Mrs. Colvin, "end with a wedding, as all other sentimental stories do; wise in the authors to conclude then lest the truth should compel them to admit that husbands and wives do sometimes quarrel, as well as lovers.

What Lord Ermiston meant by begging Katharine to regard him as a cousin was soon explained. Before his departure for the continent he placed ten thousand pounds in his banker's hands for her use, entreating her not to pain him by refusing to receive it, but rather to consider it as her right; merely such a portion as would have been assigned her had her birth been sooner known.

Katharine and Herbert were touched by his generous conduct, and the wishes he expressed for their happiness, but both objected to accepting the gift. After much discussion, the matter was arranged through Mr. Colvin, Katharine consenting, though reluctantly, to receive five thousand pounds, such being about the sum which the late earl had inherited from her grandfather, who survived his son some years, though in a state of imbecility.

Mrs. Morven pleaded personally in favour of her son's wish, expressing much regret that she had been the means of depriving his lordship of a bride whose worth she could now appreciate. The wedding presents from both were many and splendid, and given with more of kindness than of pride.

Clara, to her great delight, was bridesmaid, and behaved with fitting decorum during the ceremony, though she had before horrified Mrs. Carter, who had claimed the honour of dressing the bride, by divers affectionate hugs of her dear Katharine, thereby displacing some of the plaits which that worthy person had so carefully arranged. Mr. Colvin gave the bride away, tempering, he asserted, by his soberness, the wild spirits of the bridegroom.

The wedding tour included Cowford and Beechen Cliff.

At the former they found kind Mrs. Binks, as usual, with her best parlour all of a caddle; utterly unable to express as she desired, her delight, her wonder, and her regret, at learning that little Kate was a real lady; and then not a real lady in one sense, though she was in another; and the happy wife of the nice, merry young gentleman to whom she had taken such a fancy. "Then it was so good of her to come and see her, bringing little presents for those who had been kind to her. But there it was just like her—when she was only little Kate she was always the sweetest, willingest, and gratefulest girl she ever seed. And she was so gentle spoken, and satisfied with everything; and liked the dinner; and did not mind the best parlour being all of a caddle. And she looked so pretty, and so happy, and so proud of Mr. Eustace; and he so merry, and so proud, and so fond of her. And she had not forgotten a single creature, not even old lame Sarah who used to give her a flower sometimes 'cause she carried her pitcher. She was a real lady anybody might see. She had shaken hands with her at going away, and thanked her, and wished her and Mr. Binks health and happiness, then she looked so beautiful between crying and laughing, thanking all the people, who had come to see her off, and wish her and her husband a long life. It was a pity she could not live in the country, poor thing, instead of being obliged to bide up in that dirty, smoky London, where you could not get nothing wholesome to eat. Well, she'd mind and send her up some ducks and geese,—they had beautiful ducks and geese at Cowford, let alone other things."

Whilst kind Mrs. Binks was thus running on to the gaping rustics round, assembled to see the departure of the bridal party, Katharine was weeping tears of joy in her husband's arm.

"Oh, Herbert! I owe all this happiness to you."

"No, dear Kate, you owe it, under heaven, to your own happy, grateful temper; your own noble heart. To many the name of Cowford would have been a shame

and a terror ; you make it a joy and a glory. I love, I admire you more, weeping as you are at the marks of regard from those rustics, than when I saw you Countess of Ermiston, the object of universal admiration."

Katharine could not subdue a feeling of pain when she saw Beechen Cliff in the possession of strangers, and thought that it should have been her's ; but she looked on Herbert, and forgot her sorrow. As the rich heiress, she might not have won that love, now so precious to her, which had been given to the poor companion.

Her purpose in paying the visit, the arranging for the comforts of some old favourites, was most happily accomplished. When sold to pay Mr. Millar's creditors, Beechen Cliff had been purchased by an old friend of Herbert's father, who insisted on the young couple's becoming his guests for several days ; and so delighted were he and his amiable family with Katharine, that all entered most warmly into her views and wishes, promising to leave her favourite spots untouched, employ those she recommended, and bestow her bounties on her pensioners.

"You must come again, and see how scrupulously we attend to your wishes," said the whole family.

Katharine went, and declared on her second departure that she no longer regretted the loss of Beechen Cliff.

"Thank you, Mrs. Eustace ; you could have said nothing more flattering; we know all that those words mean," observed Mr. Tennyson, with a friendly shake of the hand.

Arriving during their tour at the village where Darrell had died, Katharine expressed a wish to visit his grave, and they visited the churchyard accordingly.

"There it is, in that dark corner, and a woman stretched across it, if I mistake not."

"Poor Nan Darrell by her dress," said Katharine.

It was poor Nan. They spoke kindly to her, but she heeded them not. They attempted to raise her, but she clung to the grave, clutching the rank grass in her hands, that they might not move her, and uttering mournful

moans. Her strength was not equal to her will, and they succeeded in raising her. Herbert supported her, whilst Katharine kneeling before her took her hands in her's.

"Do you not know me, Nan? I am Kate—little Kate."

The poor creature ceased her moaning, and raised her head with a sudden look of intelligence, gazing at her steadily for some moments, as if to be certain of her identity.

"Yes, you are little Kate, come nearer, and I will tell you all. You are not my child, nor Darrell's—you are a lady. I have got the papers some where—but I don't know where—I don't know many thing now!" she added, passing her hand across her brow. "I wanted to see you, that I might tell you; and now I have quite forgotten."

"Never mind, Nan, I have the papers, and know all about it; your husband has told everything."

"Has James? well, I am glad of that! I feared he would not. So now you are a lady in your own light, as you should be. And do you ride in a fine coach?" she demanded eagerly, with some return of her former fantastic manner.

"I am acknowledged by my family—married to Mr. Eustace—you remember him—and am very, very happy."

Nan looked at Herbert, then nodded her head.

"Yes, I remember; the lord you were to marry; and I was not at the wedding, as I said. Well, I am glad!—you were always a good girl, Kate. And now go," she said. "I want to talk to James—to tell him that I have been ill, and that is why I could not come before;" and she would have thrown herself on the grave again, had not Herbert withheld her.

"Why do you hold me? I am not mad, as they say; I want to talk to James."

"Come with me, Nan," said Katharine earnestly; "I will tell you all about the wedding, and the white favours—and my gown."

Nan shook her head, repeating, "Poor James."

"Only come, Nan, and I will give you a new gown, and a new handkerchief; and they shall be fit for a queen; and a hat with a feather in it"

"Will you, really? A handsome gown? And shall I ride in your carriage?" asked the poor creature eagerly, her eyes dancing at the thought of the promised finery; but before Katharine could reply, this gleaming of her former vanity had passed away. "No! no! I won't go. What is the use of being smart and grand now? James cannot see me. I don't want the gown—nor to ride in the carriage, I only want to be with him—to tell him why I could not come to him when he was dying."

Katharine's heart reproached her for having practised on her vanity, though for a kindly purpose. Amid the wreck of thought—the squalid misery of years, one feeling lingered still—pure and undimmed—the love of early years;—her vanity had been connected with, nay, partly based on this.

"Come with us, Nan; and I will tell you what your husband said; I was with him when he died, and heard the message that he left for you."

"Were you with him? Did he ask for me? Did he say he loved me?" questioned poor Nan, looking eagerly into Herbert's face as she spoke.

"Yes, he did both; come with us, and I will tell you; he left you to our care."

The right chord had been struck, and her heart answered to the touch. She followed them with the submission of a little child, drinking in Herbert's words as though they were the very essence of her being.

"Then he was not angry, knowing how I loved him, and would have come to him if I could?" she exclaimed, bursting into tears—the first she had shed since Darrell's death. Learning that he had intrusted her to their care, she no longer opposed their will, but went to bed taking the nourishment they offered, and soon after sank into a quiet sleep. Katharine, who was sitting by her when she awoke, was struck with her appearance.

"Is that you, Kate?" she said in a soft voice. "I

am happy now, I have seen him ; and he was so kind, just as when I knew him first. And he wants me to be with him. You must see to that, Kate, put me in the same grave, up in that quiet corner. And, Kate ; I took care of you when you had no one else to mind you ;—won't you put a bit of stone just that they shan't dig him up ?"

"I will. I will ; no one shall touch you—you shall be together," said Katharine in a broken voice.

"I know you will, since you say so, Kate ; you were always a good child."

"Can I do anything else to please you ?"

"Could you just say a prayer for me—I used to pray myself, when I was young ; but after that we led a wild life, and I only thought of pleasing James. And now I am not as I used to be—I have been trying to remember, and I can't ; but I taught you a prayer ; I know I did just when he went away. And, Katharine, I give you all my handsome clothes ; I don't mind for these things now. Pray !—pray !—you speak so soft —and God may hear you — you have not been so wicked."

Herbert and Katharine knelt beside the sufferer. Nan listened with attention ; her looks became less wild—her lips moved as though she followed them in prayer ;—then the half-raised head sank back on the pillow with a sigh, and Herbert led his weeping wife from the room, for he saw that life had passed away.

Poor Nan's wishes were fulfilled ; Herbert himself attending the funeral in gratitude for the affection which she had always shown to Katharine.

Lady Mexington took no notice of the announcement of her granddaughter's intended wedding ; and, on accidentally meeting her, vouchsafed only a stiff bow to Katharine's inquiries after her health. Baulked in this scheme of ambition she more earnestly sought the aggrandisement of her son's family ; but here, too, she was doomed to disappointment. Her eldest grandson, the heir to the title, contracted a secret marriage with a penniless

girl of indifferent character, and ignoble birth. The fact was abruptly announced to the countess.

"It is false!" she exclaimed, starting up from her chair.

"It is but too true."

Lady Mexington raised her hand to her fore head—uttered a low moan, and sank back a corpse.

Amid her titled relatives there were some to whom Katharine became much attached; and who ever took a friendly interest in her fortunes.

Mrs. Binks did not forget to send ducks, fowls, and geese, that dear Mrs. Eustace might not be starved; and the good woman never walked so proudly as when arrayed in gown, or shawl given by little Kate; nor was she ever weary of showing the handsome clock sent down by Herbert for the best parlour; whilst to lure visitors to Cowford we will add that, in honour of the present, the best room is now rarely in a caddle; and smoking has not been allowed there since its arrival.

No wonder that Mrs. Banham was so anxious to dispose of her daughters. Having resolved to live, as she called it, as long as she could, the time soon came when they could no longer live at all, according to her estimate of life. Charlotte run off with a needy fortune-hunter, each deceived as to the wealth of the other, and a more miserable couple cannot be found in all his majesty's dominions. The rest of the family went to Havre to avoid their creditors; and just contrive to exist on a small pittance allowed by grumbling relatives, who justly blame them for their selfish and dishonourable extravagance. A lingering and painful illness shows Maria Banham in her true colours; the harmony of words and voice is gone; and, fretful and irritable, she is shunned by all, compelling her mother to pay the penalty of making pride and vanity the ruling springs of action in her children.

"I hope you are better, Mr. Bell," said Herbert Eustace.

"No: I am much worse."

"I am very sorry to hear it, sir."

"And why should you be sorry? Neither my life nor death can advantage you. Do you know that I am dying, and that I have nothing but an annuity?"

"I have heard both; and believe the latter."

"What do you come for, then?"

"To show my gratitude for your advice."

"And much you liked that advice!"

"I did not find it very palatable at the time, sir, I admit, being one of those who prefer following the scarlet rag to preceding the whip. I should have been more grateful had the advice been sweetened by a softer manner; as I should then have felt more assured that it was spoken solely for my benefit, not for your pleasure."

"Ay, there it is," said the sick man, laying his hand upon his arm. "I am a disappointed man; I once believed an injured one, so I quarrelled with mankind, and sank my fortune in an annuity that none of those who might come about me should profit by my death; and now I am left alone in my dying hour. I did not smile, when others joyed—I did not weep, when others mourned—and now, none smile—none weep with me. I was too stern and harsh. I rebuked not for God's glory, or for man's good; but to pamper my own pride—to pleasure my own churlishness. A death-bed has different thoughts, it gives back the rebukes which the proud heart gave to others. It is an awful thing to die, even with loving friends around—the hope of heaven in the heart—the prayer of faith, faith proved by acts upon the lips—but it is more fearful far to die alone, with not an eye to weep—and not a voice to soothe—the hope of mercy shrouded by the fear of judgment—the lips unused to humble, fervent prayer refusing to perform the task—whilst misspent days, and weeks, and years, rise up in quick succession, each telling tales of levity and sin. You are young, Herbert Eustace, but look you to it. The strong oak is uptorn—the stately ship goes down with its sails all set, gliding on a summer sea—think in youth that you must die, and give account. And how can he ask mercy, who has shown none? All may not have a dying hour to think upon

these things ; and they are horrible to think upon ; and yet such hour, fearful though it be, is more a blessing than what the worldling calls a prosperous life. And one thing more, look to your daily habits—they are bonds to bind, when we would fain be free. There is no throwing off in one short hour the thoughts and feelings of long years. Do you not see this now in me ? What am I, that I should council you ? Ay, and in sternness, too—giving a churlish welcome, when in my heart I blessed your coming. It has become my nature now—I quarrelled with my kind ;—I should have quarrelled with myself. I nursed an evil temper till it grew a fiend, that would not be controlled ; and I who should have been its master, was its slave ! Now go—tell the world a merry tale of Philip Bell ;—tell how he mocked at man—and now let man mock him. This is but just ! I have heard you make a right good story from less rich materials. Go ! Why do you tarry ?"

"You do me wrong, sir," said Herbert, "I trust I have better learnt to reverence truth ; and if I should repeat your words it would not be in mockery."

"Then you really came in kindness ?" said the sick man, fixing his eyes upon him.

"Indeed I did, sir, to please Katharine ; who bade me ask if you would see her. We both hold ourselves indebted for your warnings."

"Is this true, young man. I see it is by that reproachful look : and thank you. Go now—I would be alone—mind and body are grown weak, though pride remains; but come to-morrow—and bring Katharine. I used to say her gratitude and guilelessness could not last long ; but they have lasted—have outlived deceit and sorrow. If I had kindly feelings towards any, it was towards you and her. Now go—you will not deceive me ? you will come to-morrow ?" asked the sick man with doubting eagerness, as Herbert reached the door.

"Rely upon us, sir."

He did rely upon them, and they came. Day after day one or other sat beside him, till the churlish heart grew loving ; and the humbled and enlightened spirit

passed from earth, with the prayer of hope and faith upon his lips—the words of human kindness in his ear.

The pretty Mary Silverton, after her marriage with the friend whom Herbert had so kindly nursed, became a great ally of Katharine's; and the latter's little jealousy making them food for merriment.

"Now that you have contented Clara's curiosity, and that she has established herself to her complete satisfaction between her cousins, the Eustaces, you must reply to innumerable questions from her mother; for it is so long since you have been at Farnley Lodge that I expect a most compendious budget of news.—To begin, how is demure Mrs. Carter? And is it true that she and her quiet husband have resigned the dignity of householders for the stations of *maitre* and *maitresse d'hôtel* with Mr. and Mrs. Eustace?"

"It is true; we found she wished it; and we knew how to appreciate her worth. She is invaluable in keeping mistress and servants in order," said the laughing Herbert.

"For my part, I do not know what I should do without her; she is the only person who can keep Herbert within any bounds," said his wife.

"I suspect the poor woman has a hard task to manage you both; and now having established '*place aux dames*' by this first question, I next give the precedence to rank. Is Lord Ermiston to marry Lady Hester Strathern, with her great wealth—her ancient birth—and her immense stupidity?"

"We believe so."

"Well, Katharine, I see you are vexed at his choice, so I will say no more; he must be miserable, and you will be avenged. What are become of your theories on second love?"

"They have been found inconvenient in practice, as most theories are," observed Mr. Colvin, who had a very particular objection to theories in words, though often acting on them as sensible men ever must do.

"As for me," said Herbert, "I consider my case

quite withdrawn from the general rule, since my second love was also my first."

"And so would mine have been had I judged wisely," added Katharine.

"Admirable! And so you both think to get out of the scrape in that way. I have half a mind to bring forward all the fine things you both said about second love being less pure, less strong than a first;—a cautious consideration, rather than a generous impulse;—its beautiful bloom departed, &c., &c."

"Oh, pray don't!" exclaimed her husband with a laughable expression of alarm. "Do let them fancy themselves exceptions to the general rule—far above the common herd. Never disturb people in a comfortable belief."

"I submit, to prove myself a good wife; and proceed with my questions. Has Sir John Eustace left by will the sons of his silly spendthrift heir, who broke his neck for a wager, to your care, Herbert, without saying by your leave, or with your leave, as it is said, relying on your kindness to undertake the troublesome charge, and only leaving you a small legacy as a mark of his esteem?"

"Sir John Eustace has done this; and my simple wife is so proud of this homage, as she calls it, to her husband, that I have much ado to prevent her spoiling the children, though she has a little ugly monkey of her own to pet, which she has the impertinence to delare is the image of me. I would as soon credit a lover, as a young mother."

"Is this true, Katharine?"

"I am shocked, Mary, tempting a wife to contradict her husband. As Mr. Bampton says, this is a most unjustifiable, unwarrantable, and illegal proceeding."

"Ah, Herbert! 'Rear a wolf as you may, he will still look back to the woods,'" said his wife, holding up her finger in playful warning.

Herbert joined in the general laugh.

"I should not have cried, if the little animals had been taken off by the measles, or the hooping-cough, or some

should be much grieved at such a verdict; but acquit me of vexing my friends by unpardonable personalities. I would rather be considered an idiot than a satirist. Nan Darrell, by her claims to royalty, became, in some sort, a public character, and authors, I fear, in some sort, do the like, and must submit to the popular judgment; but I pray you to be merciful, good people, and

> "Spare my wounded feeling,
> A phrase, which less adroitly moulded,
> Means a dislike to being scolded."

Whatever the world may think, it is much more trouble to write a book than to read one; and far more easy to discover faults than to produce perfection.